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ISSUES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE
1966 REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

Interviews with:

Franklyn C. Nofziger
Gaylord B. Parkinson
William E. Roberts
Stuart K. Spencer

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Governmental History Documentation Project

Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

ISSUES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE
1966 REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

Franklyn C. Nofziger Press Secretary for Ronald Reagan, 1966

Gaylord B. Parkinson California Republican Party Official,
1962-1967

William E. Roberts Professional Campaign Management and
the Candidate, 1960-1966

Stuart K. Spencer Developing a Campaign Management
Organization

Interviews Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris and Sarah Sharp
in 1978 and 1979

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PREFACE

Covering the years 1953 to 1966, the Goodwin Knight-Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Sr., Oral History Series is the second phase of the Governmental History Documentation Project begun by the Regional Oral History Office in 1969. That year inaugurated the Earl Warren Era Oral History Project, which produced interviews with Earl Warren and other persons prominent in politics, criminal justice, government administration, and legislation during Warren's California era, 1925 to 1953.

The Knight-Brown series of interviews carries forward the earlier inquiry into the general topics of: the nature of the governor's office, its relationships with the legislature and with its own executive departments, biographical data about Governors Knight and Brown and other leaders of the period, and methods of coping with the rapid social and economic changes of the state. Key issues documented for 1953-1966 were: the rise and decline of the Democratic party, the impact of the California Water Plan, the upheaval of the Vietnam War escalation, the capital punishment controversy, election law changes, new political techniques forced by television and increased activism, reorganization of the executive branch, the growth of federal programs in California, and the rising awareness of minority groups. From a wider view across the twentieth century, the Knight-Brown period marks the final era of California's Progressive period, which was ushered in by Governor Hiram Johnson in 1910 and which provided for both parties the determining outlines of government organization and political strategy until 1966.

The Warren Era political files, which interviewers had developed cooperatively to provide a systematic background for questions, were updated by the staff to the year 1966 with only a handful of new topics added to the original ninety-one. An effort was made to record in greater detail those more significant events and trends by selecting key participants who represent diverse points of view. Most were queried on a limited number of topics with which they were personally connected; a few narrators who possessed unusual breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. Although the time frame of the series ends at the November 1966 election, when possible the interviews trace events on through that date in order to provide a logical baseline for continuing study of succeeding administrations. Similarly, some narrators whose experience includes the Warren years were questioned on that earlier era as well as the Knight-Brown period.

The present series has been financed by grants from the California State Legislature through the California Heritage Preservation Commission and the office of the Secretary of State, and by some individual donations. Portions of several memoirs were funded partly by the California Women in Politics Project under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation; the two projects were produced concurrently in this office, a joint effort made feasible by overlap of narrators, topics, and staff expertise.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library, and Willa Baum, head of the Office.

Amelia R. Fry, Project Director
Gabrielle Morris, Project Coordinator

April 1980
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Mason, Paul, *Covering the Legislature for Governor Goodwin J. Knight.*

ISSUES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE 1966 REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN. 1980.

Nofziger, Franklyn, *Press Secretary for Ronald Reagan, 1966.*

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Lowry, James, *California State Department of Mental Hygiene, 1960s.*

SAN FRANCISCO REPUBLICANS. 1980.

Christopher, George, *Mayor of San Francisco and Republican Party Candidate.*

Weinberger, Caspar W., *California Assembly, Republican State Central Committee, and Elections, 1953-1966.*

INTRODUCTION

The 1966 gubernatorial election in California marked not only the beginning of a new Republican administration with the selection of Ronald Reagan as governor, but also a point of significant changes in the management of political campaigns. This volume contains four unique interviews with key participants in Reagan's race: Dr. Gaylord Parkinson, Lyn Nofziger, Stu Spencer, and Bill Roberts. Dr. Parkinson discusses the resolution of critical tensions within the Republican party and Reagan's relationship to the party. Nofziger reflects on the campaign and Reagan from the vantage point of press secretary and personal friend. Spencer comments on the actual campaign techniques which he and Bill Roberts used so effectively. Roberts discusses the day-to-day progress of the campaign. The candidate's close reliance on his press secretary, and Spencer and Roberts, reflect the development of effective new campaign management concepts. The candidate himself was also interviewed on the topics of his campaign and the several months following it. These two interviews have been transcribed but left in process until the next segment of the Governmental History Documentation Project, that portion devoted to Reagan's two gubernatorial administrations, gets fully under way later in 1980.

Because one of the major benefits of oral history is the ability to get different perspectives on critical events, we decided to go into depth on this campaign which ended Edmund G. Brown, Sr.'s two-term domination of California politics. Ronald Reagan was actually a newcomer to the Republican party, having only two years before stumped the state for Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. How did he then suddenly become governor? On one level, the interviews included here discuss the Free Speech Movement, the reaction to the repeal of the Rumford Act in 1964, Republican party disunity, Pat Brown's two terms, and other issues which Reagan had to face as a gubernatorial candidate. On another level, these interviews reveal how Reagan and the Spencer-Roberts firm developed and successfully carried out the "citizen politician" theme, meeting the issues of the year head-on with sophisticated campaign techniques involving extensive issues research. Together, the reflections of Parkinson, Nofziger, Spencer and Roberts offer a candid portrayal of Ronald Reagan's first political campaign.

Dr. Sarah Sharp
Interviewer-Editor

15 July 1980
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LYN NOFZIGER

circa 1980

*Photo Courtesy of
United Western Newspaper, Inc.
Santa Monica, California*

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Governmental History Documentation Project

Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Franklyn C. Nofziger

PRESS SECRETARY FOR RONALD REAGAN, 1966

An Interview Conducted by
Sarah Sharp
in 1978

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Franklyn Nofziger, or Lyn Nofziger as he is more generally known, was press secretary for Ronald Reagan's first gubernatorial campaign in California in 1966. My single interview with Mr. Nofziger was held on Monday, 1 October 1978 at the headquarters of Citizens for the Republic in Santa Monica, California. At that time Mr. Nofziger was one of the high officials of this organization and Ronald Reagan was its chairman. Citizens for the Republic was housed in a small, modern, two-story building. In the outer office hung a large and handsome oil painting of Ronald Reagan, beneath which, on a coffee table, was literature on Mr. Reagan and the organization. On walls in the inner offices were displayed framed political cartoons portraying President Jimmy Carter and Bert Lance rather unfavorably.

I was impressed by how friendly and hospitable the office staff was. Mr. Nofziger's secretary, Ms. Joan Sweetland, helped me set up my tape recorder in the small conference room, and later, during the hour and a half interview session, she brought in cold soft drinks. Other members of the staff, primarily young, well-dressed men and women, confidently went about the various tasks involved in running the successful Citizens for the Republic organization and gearing up for the Reagan for President campaign. It was clear that Ronald Reagan was the focus of this organization's energy.

Mr. Nofziger returned to the office for our scheduled two o'clock appointment. Like everyone else on the staff, he was immediately affable and friendly. I had sent him an outline of the interview and supporting material, so he knew that the primary topic would be his role as press secretary during the 1966 campaign. During my research for the interview, I had benefited from several conversations on the topic of the 1966 campaign which other members of the Governmental History Documentation Project had had with Lou Cannon, author of Ronnie and Jesse.

Although he was casually dressed in a short-sleeved sports shirt, Mr. Nofziger did not take a casual approach to his interview. It was clear from the outset that he intended to be very candid. He briskly and matter-of-factly told me of the roles of the early supporters of Ronald Reagan, and of party leaders both inside and outside the Republican State Central Committee, and discussed other topics I wanted to cover. He most honestly appraised his own role in terms of his relationship with newspaper reporters, with other members of the gubernatorial campaign staff, and with Mr. Reagan himself. Mr. Nofziger considered himself to be a close political confidant of Mr. Reagan during that campaign, and it was obvious that there has been no diminution of his admiration for Mr. Reagan.

By the time the transcript of this interview was ready for his review, Mr. Nofziger had been appointed deputy chairman of the Reagan for President organization in Los Angeles. In the same businesslike manner I noted during our interview, he promptly reviewed and returned the transcript, making only minor changes.

Mr. Nofziger, so aware of the historical importance of the 1966 California gubernatorial campaign and of the candidate, Ronald Reagan, provided the Goodwin J. Knight-Edmund G. Brown, Sr., portion of the Governmental History Documentation Project with an in-depth, reflective and valuable interview.

Sarah Lee Sharp
Interviewer-Editor

August 1979
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LYN NOFZIGER BIOGRAPHY

Lyn Nofziger is the Executive Vice Chairman of Citizens for the Republic, Ronald Reagan's new political action committee.

Nofziger began his political career with Reagan in 1966, serving as his Press Secretary during his successful gubernatorial campaign.

Prior to entering politics Nofziger was a newspaperman for 16 years. He worked on both the Glendale News-Press and the Burbank Daily Review and was Editor of the Review before moving to Washington in 1958 as a correspondent for the 15 Copley newspapers. In Washington Nofziger served successively as correspondent, chief correspondent and national politics writer. He has covered two Presidential campaigns and four national conventions.

After serving as Reagan's Press Secretary, Nofziger went to Sacramento with the newly-elected Governor as his first Communications Director.

He left Reagan in the Fall of 1968 to take over management of Max Rafferty's Senate campaign. Following this he opened his own public relations firm, Index Associates, in Sacramento.

In July, 1969, he accepted a job offer from President Nixon and went to work at the White House as Deputy Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations. In February, 1971, again at the President's request, he moved to the Republican National Committee as Deputy Chairman for Communications.

In January, 1972, he became Executive Director of the California Committee for the Re-election of the President. Under his direction the President's California campaign carried the state for the President by more than one million votes.

In 1973 Nofziger again opened a political public relations firm, the Lyn Nofziger Co., in Sacramento. But he closed that in July, 1975, to go to Washington to participate in the formation of Citizens for Reagan, the committee that was formed to explore Reagan's chances to win the Republican Presidential nomination and later became Reagan's official campaign committee.

During the Reagan campaign Nofziger served successively as Press Secretary, Director of Reagan's successful California primary campaign and finally as Director of Convention Activities in Kansas City.

Since the convention, Nofziger has been in charge, first, of closing down the Citizens for Reagan operation and, second, of opening operations of Citizens for the Republic.

In addition, in September and October he served as an adviser and speech writer for Republican Vice Presidential nominee, Senator Bob Dole and handled special projects for the President Ford Committee.

Lyn Nofziger is a native Californian and a graduate of San Jose State College. He is married and the father of two grown daughters.

In recent years he has spoken to many Republican groups on the status of the Republican Party and the importance of winning.

In 1979, he is Deputy Chairman of Reagan for President, headquartered in Los Angeles.

I BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

[Date of Interview: October 10, 1978]##

Sharp: I'd like to get some biographical background so we know who you are besides just having your name and your thoughts on your role as press secretary in 1966 for Ronald Reagan. Could you just spend a few minutes telling me about yourself?

Nofziger: Surely.

I was born in Bakersfield, California, on June 8, 1924. My mother was Rosalind Curran, who was also born in Bakersfield, California, and my father was Bennett R. Nofziger, who was born in Redlands, California.

I grew up in California, in Bakersfield and in the San Fernando Valley and over in Altadena. I graduated from high school in Canoga Park, 1942, joined the army in 1942, and served until November of 1945. I got out, fooled around awhile, went to San Jose State and graduated in 1950.

Sharp: So you're a Californian all the way.

Nofziger: Californian. Majored in journalism. I spent sixteen years as a working newspaperman.

Sharp: What newspaper did you work for?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 43.

Nofziger: The Copley newspapers, headquartered in San Diego. I worked in Burbank and Glendale for eight years, and then eight years in their Washington bureau.

Sharp: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Nofziger: I have a brother, Dr. James Nofziger, who is an animal nutritionist. He's a Ph.D.--you know, he can't fix your leg or operate on your appendix. I have a sister, Rosemary Will, who lives in San Jose.

Sharp: Are you the youngest?

Nofziger: No, I'm in the middle. My brother is older and my sister is younger.

Sharp: When were you first interested in politics?

Nofziger: Well, it's hard to tell. If you're a reporter, I suppose you become interested in politics because politics is a part of where the action is, and reporters get involved in covering where the action is.

I covered the 1960 Republican and Democratic national conventions, and covered those campaigns, both Nixon's and Kennedy's. I covered the 1964 Republican and Democratic conventions and the Goldwater campaign. I was assigned to the Goldwater campaign almost entirely during that year. So I became very involved in covering politics.

I went to Washington in 1958 and covered everything from politics to the Pentagon to Congress. I was made the national political reporter for the Copley newspapers in 1963.

[the interviewer sent Mr. Nofziger a few additional biographical questions which he answered in written form]

Sharp: What religious influences did you have growing up?

Nofziger: Parents devout Protestants. Fundamentalists. Grew up with some church, more Bible reading.

Sharp: What is your ethnic background?

Nofziger: English, Irish, German, Swiss, etc., but at least third generation American on both sides.

Sharp: What subjects did you like in school?

Nofziger: Just about everything except music and art and foreign languages.

Sharp: What kinds of books did you read as a child?

Nofziger: Everything I could get my hands on.

Sharp: What did you do for fun as a child?

Nofziger: Read, listened to radio, went to sports events (baseball, football, boxing, track), organized sports (tennis, gymnastics, softball), whatever else kids do in small towns.

[transcript resumes]

II THE 1966 GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN OF RONALD REAGAN

Why Reagan Ran for Governor

Sharp: The next set of questions, which will probably cover the rest of our time, are exclusively devoted to the 1966 gubernatorial campaign. Do you know how and why Mr. Reagan decided to run for governor?

Nofziger: No, I don't really, though I will tell you that when I was a reporter, I began getting the word in 1965 that he would run for governor. His brother, J. Neil Reagan, known to his friends as "Moon," had been a television advisor to Goldwater in the 1964 campaign. That's where I got to know him. In those days "Moon" was telling me that Ronald Reagan would run against Tom Kuchel, no matter what Tom Kuchel ran for. There was some talk then that Tom Kuchel, who was the United States Senator, would run for governor in '66. Of course, he did not.

Way back as early as 1962, some Republicans had gone to Reagan and asked him to run for governor. Congressman H. Allen Smith from Glendale was a friend of mine, and he told me that a group of people had gone to Reagan. I said, "What, that liberal?"

Smith said, "No, no, he's changed!" [laughter]

So they had gone back and Reagan had turned them down. I do know that again in--probably late 1964, after the elections, or early '65, after Reagan made that famous speech for Goldwater--that a number of prominent California Republicans came to him and asked him to run for governor. I suppose that's how it began.

Nofziger: By mid '65, most observers thought he was going to run. I was still in Washington, but I was coming out to California on business. I called his brother "Moon" Reagan and said, "Hey, I'm coming to California and I'd like to interview your brother, because I'm convinced he's going to run for governor."

And when I interviewed him [Ronald Reagan]--and I can't give you the date, except that it was the date that the Watts riots broke out.* We met and had lunch at the Hollywood Brown Derby, Ron, and "Moon," and myself. Even then, he wouldn't say flat out that he was going to run, but by then I was convinced, and I'm a pretty good political reporter. Obviously, it turned out that he didn't run.

Sharp: But you had not met Ronald Reagan before?

Nofziger: I had met Ronald Reagan once before in June of that year. He had gone to Ohio to make a couple of political speeches, one for John Ashbrook and one for the Ohio Republican party. At that time too, I was convinced Reagan was going to run, and I thought I'd go out and take a look at him. There were two or three reasons for me to go to Ohio anyway. So I met him that time very briefly.

Sharp: We have some names of some people who surrounded Mr. Reagan early on--Henry Salvatori, and Holmes Tuttle and Justin Dart--

Nofziger: No, Justin Dart is a wrong name for early on. He came in after the primary elections.

Holmes Tuttle and Henry Salvatori, and probably Jack Hume up in San Francisco--Jaquelin Hume--and Ed Mills. Let me think if I can think of one or two others. That basically was it. There are probably one or two others that would come to mind.

Sharp: Who were these people and why did they want Mr. Reagan to run for governor?

Nofziger: Well, primarily because they wanted somebody to beat Pat Brown. I'm sure they saw Ron and his speech with Goldwater, which was very effective, and they saw that here was a man who had a lot of voter appeal and, frankly, whose conservative approach to government was similar to their own.

*The riots broke out in the Watts section of Los Angeles on 11 August 1965 and continued through 16 August.

Nofziger: Oh, there was a man named [A.C.] Cy Rubel, also, who is now dead, who was the retired president of Union Oil. He was one of those early supporters.

They were Republicans, and especially Holmes Tuttle is a Republican. I mean period, without any hyphenations there. They were all basically conservative in their outlook, and they saw Ron as a man who not only shared their general philosophic views, but was a very effective spokesman and a very effective campaigner.

Sharp: Early on, was it obvious that because these men backed or supported Mr. Reagan, that he would have no trouble financially?

Nofziger: I think that's probably a fair statement. These were wealthy men, and Holmes Tuttle is probably the best fund raiser in the history of the Republican party in California. The group around Ronald Reagan had contacts among the wealthy conservatives and the wealthy Republicans.

There is never a time when you don't have trouble raising enough money, because you can always spend what you raise. So unless you are Nelson Rockefeller and have millions of your own to spend, well, you've got trouble. One reason wealthy men are wealthy is because they are careful about how they spend their money.

It's always tough to raise money, but these men were dedicated. They gave large sums and they went out and convinced other people to give large sums.

My feeling about 1966 is that Ronald Reagan would have run, or would have won, if these men had not been there. He'd have won if my mother had been running the campaign, but the fact that they were there and raised these sums, and that he had good campaign management, all contributed to the size and the ease of the victory.

Appointment to Press Secretary

Sharp: How did he ask you to be his campaign press secretary?

Nofziger: I don't know exactly, except I suspicion that it was through his brother, who, as I say, had become a good friend of mine.

Nofziger: They began coming to me--and when I say "they" I mean primarily Stu Spencer and Bill Roberts, the firm of Spencer-Roberts, which was running the campaign--asking me to come out and be the press secretary. I told them no several times. If you looked in their files, and they've still got the letters, you'll find correspondence in which I say no.

They were looking, as near as I can recall, for somebody who was familiar with the national press, and obviously, they wanted a Republican. It's kind of hard to find Republican reporters in Washington.

Of course, the Copley newspapers had ten newspapers in California, including both those in San Diego, and James Copley was a prominent Republican here. I guess they figured I had enough political background and had enough contacts, and so forth.

Eventually what the Ronald Reagan people did was go down to Jim Copley. Henry Salvatori, and I think Holmes Tuttle, went down and asked him to give me a leave of absence, which he agreed to do. Then Spencer-Roberts came and frankly offered me twice what I was making. [laughter]

Sharp: That's very hard to turn down!

Nofziger: It is very hard to turn down, yes it is.

I had no experience in this area, and frankly, in retrospect, in many respects I was a lousy press secretary. As I look at some others, I wasn't all that lousy, but in terms of what I know today, I was. But the world is filled with lousy press secretaries. I was not alone.

Notes on the Pre-Primary Period

Sharp: Well, we'll get into that a little bit later. I have a whole set of questions on the day-to-day details. But let's begin with a general question. How was the pre-primary period organized?

Nofziger: You know, I think you're talking to the wrong person. In those days I was a press secretary. I had not been involved in running campaigns. I could talk a little, but the people you'll really have to talk to are Bill Roberts and Stu Spencer.

Nofziger: Spencer-Roberts did this. Typical of California, which is such a huge state, they broke it down north and south. They had a northern chairman and a southern chairman, and then they broke it up by counties. They had done something very smart. They had said, "To heck with all the old hack Republicans out there, we'll go out and get some bright, new faces."

And they did, all up and down the state. They went out and got bright, new faces, like Bill Clark up in Ventura County, who's now a supreme court judge here. Like Gordon Luce, down in San Diego. They broke up L.A. [Los Angeles] County into about five different regions.

But the actual putting together of a state-wide campaign, if it wasn't done before I got here, was done completely aside from what I was doing. I cannot talk to that and be an objective person.

Sharp: Can you comment on the opposition and support for Reagan as he came up through the channels in the Republican party?

Nofziger: What you have to remember is that there were two other candidates out there. One of them was a total maverick named William Penn Patrick, who had put together some kind of a company that sold natural cosmetics--avocado cream and stuff like that. [laughter] He was killed not too long ago, three or four years ago, in an airplane crash. Patrick was a latecomer to the party and not really a part of it. He ran a bad third.

But the other candidate was George Christopher, who, of course, had been the mayor of San Francisco. George had run for lieutenant governor of California and lost. He represented the moderate to liberal wing of the party. He came out of San Francisco and had the support of a lot of those northerners there. George, I have always thought, felt that he had a right to the Republican nomination because he'd been in the party a long time and had worked his way up through the ranks, and so forth. There was resentment up there that this interloper Reagan, who not too many years before had been a Democrat, would come in and try to take the party over.

The things that Ron had going for him were, first of all, that he had a lot of prominent Republicans down here [in southern California] who were siding with him, and wealthy Republicans too. Secondly, he was just a very good candidate. And number three, he came from the place where the votes are. Sixty percent of the votes in California are south of the Tehachapis.

Nofziger: It is very tough anymore for a northern Californian to be elected to a state-wide office. Even Jerry [Governor Edmund G., Jr.] Brown, although he's originally from up there, made his residence down here when he ran for governor, when he ran for secretary of state. The only person in recent times who has really been elected from northern California was Sam Hayakawa.*

Sharp: How did he keep the support of all the elements of the Republican party and yet still appear a moderate?

Nofziger: I'm not sure that Ronald Reagan appeared a moderate in 1966. I'm sure he appeared to be a conservative.

The Republican party in California is basically a conservative party, as Nelson Rockefeller has found out, as Gerald Ford has found out, and so forth. The conservative candidate in the primary usually wins, if there are not other circumstances involved. That's one reason why Reagan won that primary. So, I don't really think he appeared a moderate. Even in the general election he appeared as a conservative.

But you've got to remember than an awful lot of registered Democrats out there are conservatives. You might call them red-neck, or whatever, but they are people who are Democrats because their parents were Democrats when their parents came here from Oklahoma, or Texas or Arkansas, or Missouri or Kansas, or whatever.

So Reagan won for three reasons. One, his own personality. Two, people were tired of Pat [Governor Edmund G., Sr.] Brown. And three, all other things being equal in this state, you probably have more conservatives than liberals.

Sharp: Would you say that the county committees that were most supportive of Reagan were southern Californian?

Nofziger: Oh, sure, it always was that case.

Sharp: And were centered around Los Angeles?

Nofziger: Actually, Reagan carried all but two counties, I think, in the general election, San Francisco and one of those little counties up there. San Francisco is always going to go Democrat.

*Samuel I. Hayakawa was elected Republican U.S. Senator on 2 November 1976.

Nofziger: What you have to do in this state is break even in L.A. County and carry the rest of southern California, and then you win.

Reagan, if you will look, carried heavily in the nine southern counties, and in the San Joaquin Valley, and that's what did it.

Sharp: Before the primary in 1966, there was a huge wave of new Republicans who registered. Was there any special appeal made to these new Republicans.

Nofziger: I think so. You want to remember that for reasons that I don't know, Barry Goldwater, although he lost badly, had had a lot of effect on the country. The country, following the Goldwater defeat, moved sharply conservative over the next four years. The people who went out and re-registered Republican, I think, were largely registering in protest to Lyndon Johnson and to the liberals out there.

I don't think we went out and said, "Hey, you're a new voter, vote for us."

But those were conservatives that we were aiming at.

Sharp: A state poll showed progressively through late '65 and through May of '66 a narrowing in the lead that Reagan had over Mr. Christopher--

Nofziger: They were bad polls, and I said so all that time. The lead never narrowed. If you were out with Reagan, and you watched it, you could see that Reagan was clearly ahead and that the gap was widening. And if you will notice, all of a sudden it came down to late May, and those poll takers were out there scrambling around, trying to make their polls catch up with what was happening, and they never did.

I think the Field poll had us eighteen points ahead, and ABC or one of the networks had us twenty points ahead, or something like that, and Reagan got two-thirds of the vote. Reagan beat Pat Brown two to one. The poll takers never did catch up with the fact that Reagan was going to win this overwhelmingly.

I travelled constantly with Reagan during that period. I would come back and say, "Look, we're just going to beat the heck out of these guys."

All my friends back here were saying, "You're out of your mind."

Nofziger: But it was very clear. Of all the campaigns that I have been in, and all the campaigns I've watched, the one where there was a guy clearly winning and clearly widening the gap was Ronald Reagan's, first in the primary and then in the general. There was just no question in my mind.

Hell, I had more doubts about Nixon beating McGovern when I ran that campaign in California in '72. I had more doubts then than I had about Reagan beating Christopher or Brown. That was probably naïveté, having just gotten into the business. [laughter]

Sharp: Can you comment on the article that Drew Pearson wrote--

Nofziger: Sure. Totally phony article. Had no basis in fact that I know of at all. I have talked to people and talked to people, and said, "Hey, is there anything here?"

Of all the people who should have known, it is me, because I was very much involved in that unhappy episode. I have never been able to find anybody who knows of the cabin, who knows of an orgy, who has a tape, who has a picture, who has anything. Pearson dreamed it up--he must have been smoking pot. It was the most dishonest thing I've ever seen.

He never checked it with anybody that I know. He never called me, he never called Bill Clark, he never called Ed [Edwin] Meese. I can go right down the line. It was just made up out of whole cloth. Totally phony.

Sharp: Drew Pearson was involved in the campaign writing other kinds of articles too. He wrote an article exposing, as it were, George Christopher and his problems with the dairy industry.

Nofziger: Oh, that milk thing, that OPA [Office of Price Administration] thing that goes clear back--you know, they blamed the Reagan people for planting that thing and we had nothing to do with it. That was another unfortunate thing. I'm not a Drew Pearson fan. I don't think he was an honest man. You may open that on the record at any time. [laughter]

The General Election Period

Assuming Staff Members from George Christopher

Sharp: Let's move on and talk about the period after the primary, after it was clear that Reagan was the man for the Republican party. What was it like to have George Christopher's staff come over to your side? Did their presence make significant changes?

Nofziger: No, not really. Immediately after the primary, the Reagan people went to the Christopher people and said, "Join us."

They had been a lot of the same establishment people. There wasn't all that much problem among them. The only person who remained upset was George Christopher, but all of his people came over.

But those [Christopher's staff] people were at the non-professional level. They were chairmen and they were finance people, and that, and they melted in very well. We just continued ahead with the staff level work, with the Reagan people running it. But out in the counties, every Reagan chairman had gone and asked the Christopher people to come in and join, and it worked very well. I'm sure there were some cases of conflict, but I don't recall any. It was the smoothest putting together of two campaigns I've ever seen.

I suspect that there were two reasons for it. One, the fact that Reagan had won so overwhelmingly. There was no "What if," or "We might have," or "We could have," or anything. It was such a devastating defeat. And the other one was, I think that there was more strongly than any time since that I can recall, a feeling that we had to go beat the incumbent. People really put aside differences.

I think too, Reagan is such a nice man. He goes out and he's hard to dislike. He's hard to hold a grudge against.

Sharp: When people run campaigns, often there is a sense of a big push at a certain point. Did that happen in the Reagan campaign?

Nofziger: I can't tell you. You know, you always work hard and try to build to a peak. Once again, that would be the organizational part of that, and as I look back, I really was isolated from the organizational part of it, because when Reagan was on the road, I was on the road. And he was on the road most of the time. I just can't help you there.

Dr. Gaylord Parkinson and the "Eleventh Commandment"

Sharp: Can you tell us anything about the role of Dr. Gaylord Parkinson?*

*Dr. Gaylord Parkinson, of El Cajon, was vice chairman of the Republican State Central Committee from 1962 to 1964 and chairman from 1964 to 1967.

Nofziger: Yes, I can. "Parky" had invented the "Eleventh Commandment."* Actually, a man named Bob Walker says he invented it--Bob now works for Joe Coors up in Colorado.

The purpose of the "Eleventh Commandment" was to keep the other side in the primary from attacking Reagan, because we felt clearly that Reagan was ahead. Therefore, if we could keep these people from going on the attack, you could render them impotent. "Parky" was the state chairman, and was supposed to be neutral, but was nevertheless very quietly on our side.

The role he played was keeping the party neutral, was keeping the party ready to join forces after the primary. "Parky" was probably the best state chairman we've had in my time in politics. He understood that some things had to be done to build the party, and I think he clearly understood that Reagan was going to win this thing early on. So he did things quietly. He wasn't overt about it, and he didn't do anything particularly to hurt George Christopher. He just didn't do anything to help him. Really, by not helping George Christopher, and with this one thing, the "Eleventh Commandment," Parkinson pretty much helped assure a Reagan victory.

The John Birch Society##

Sharp: Let's talk a little bit about the Republican state convention that was held on August 5th, after the primary. During this convention, Lee Sherry Smith urged the Republican party to denounce the John Birch Society. As you may remember, there was actually no statement made on the society at all by the convention. I was wondering what Mr. Reagan thought about this convention and how he might have used the Republican platform that was written for his campaign. Did he use it in the press?

Nofziger: No, not to my recollection.

That state convention doesn't stand out in my memory at all. The John Birch thing does.

*Dr. Parkinson's "Eleventh Commandment" was, "Thou shalt not speak ill of any Republican."

Nofziger: Reagan came very early to the conclusion that his response to the Birch Society was that he would not endorse the Birch Society and neither would he reject them. If anybody said, "We endorse Ronald Reagan," they have accepted his, Reagan's, views, and not the other way around.

He would not say that he stood for what the Birch Society stood for, but if the Birch Society endorsed him, he would take that endorsement, on the grounds that they were accepting his philosophy.

And that worked very well. I think by the time we came to the general election the Birch thing was not an issue. The press and some liberal Republicans tried to make it an issue in the primary, but he'd never been a member of the Birch Society.

I do recall that one time--and I can't remember whether it was in the general or the primary--somebody had set up a reception for Reagan in Pasadena at the home of a person who was a member of the Birch Society. Most of our people thought, "Well, it doesn't matter a heck of a lot."

But I was very concerned about it. I raised a lot of objections and we finally got it moved. I just didn't feel we wanted to be that close. You could accept their vote, but you didn't have to become involved with them on that kind of a basis, even though it was just one of those things. Ron wouldn't have even known about it, but we just didn't need that.

Sharp: As some political analysts see the Republican party in California, the John Birch Society is a tremendous force to be reckoned with in the Republican party.

Nofziger: Not so. Never has been. I can't say never has been. I can say since I have been in the party in California since '66. The people who worry about the John Birch Society are the counterparts of the people who worry about the Communists. They see Birchers under their bed.

The John Birch Society has never been a factor. They are a small, vocal group and they will make a lot of noise. If every Bircher in the state voted against Ronald Reagan, he'd have won overwhelmingly. I will guarantee you that. There aren't enough of them to be effective.

##

Sharp: Just a few more comments on the August state convention--It's interesting that you don't emphasize it very much--

Nofziger: No, I don't even remember it.

I'll tell you what happened. My father died right around that time. He'd been dying of cancer, and I didn't get to it. That's why I've forgotten. I was not there. I just did not go up to it.

The Role of Spencer-Roberts

Sharp: Let's talk a little about Spencer-Roberts, as a p.r. [public relations] firm. Do you know when they came to work on the campaign, and who actually contacted them and asked them to come and work with Reagan?

Nofziger: You know, of course, that they had run the Rockefeller campaign here in '64.

I think that probably two or three people, largely Holmes Tuttle and Henry Salvatori, went to Spencer-Roberts and asked them to go to work for Reagan. Goldwater had recommended Spencer-Roberts even though they lost to him. That was before I got into it, because they hired me. They had been on a retainer while they were, quote, "looking at whether or not Reagan should run," from, I guess, the middle of 1965, on.

Sharp: Why did they accept Reagan as a client when they had turned down George Christopher?

Nofziger: Maybe they wanted a winner. [laughter] I would think that had I been here in the state at that time, and known as much about politics then as I know now, I'd have done what they did.

Reagan was an exceptional candidate. He was a highly unusual candidate, and I think that any unbiased reporter, as I was in those days, would clearly have said that this guy is going to win it, barring the unforeseen.

George Christopher was a nice man and a good, decent man, but just was not particularly a good candidate. I never thought he was a good state-wide candidate. He came from the wrong part of the state and everything else. I'd have taken Reagan sight unseen on that.

Sharp: Let's just break for a minute and not talk about Spencer-Roberts, but talk about you a little bit.

Why did you want him to be governor?

Nofziger: Reagan--well, that's an interesting thing. I wish you hadn't asked. [laughter]

I met him, I guess, really to talk to in August of '65. I then came out and met with some of his people. He's sort of basically my kind of Republican. I am a conservative Republican, so I shared the same philosophy.

Frankly, I was impressed with him when I met him. He's an impressive man.

Thirdly, I thought he could win. You know, if you don't win in this business, you don't get anything done. I thought that he could beat Pat Brown. And, as I say, we share the same philosophy.

You never know whether a man's going to be a good governor or a good president until he's elected. You don't know whether he can cope with it, or anything else. So you can't ever say, "Well, this guy is going to be the better executive," or, "this guy knows how to run it better," or, "this guy is going to get along better with the legislature," or anything like that.

All you can say is, "Does this man represent me? Do I think he's an able man? Do I think he's an honest man? And, do I think he can win?"

Sharp: What did Spencer-Roberts, as a p.r. firm, really do during the campaign?

Nofziger: Well, p.r. firm is a misnomer. They are a political public relations firm. Spencer-Roberts ran the campaign. Bill Roberts ran it on a day-to-day basis. They organized it. They found the county chairmen and those kind of things. They scheduled the candidate.

Sharp: Did they do speech-writing and fund raising as well?

Nofziger: Reagan wrote most of his own speeches, and what he didn't write, I wrote, toward the tail end. But they were primarily Reagan's speeches.

Spencer-Roberts found the political researchers and the issues researchers. They didn't do the fund raising, or the big fund raising, because Holmes Tuttle was doing that. And Henry Salvatori, although Henry is a fund giver and Holmes is a fund raiser. There's a big difference.

Nofziger: Spencer-Roberts made the decisions on the advertising. They made the decisions on hiring the staff. They did the scheduling of the candidate. They put together the organization. So they were campaign management. They are a campaign management firm, not a p.r. [public relations] firm.

Sharp: Who decided on the citizen politician theme?

Nofziger: I don't know. That decision had already been made by the time I got here. It was a good decision, but I don't know who did it. I suspect it was Spencer-Roberts. I feel that, but you'd have to ask.

Nofziger Assesses His Own Role in the Campaign

Sharp: What was your relationship with Spencer-Roberts during the campaign, as the press secretary?

Nofziger: It was a very good one.

You have to understand, Stu Spencer served as a kind of consultant, but he was doing other things. The guy who ran the day to day was Bill Roberts. My relationship with him was very good.

They literally had it broken down so that I was the guy who travelled with the candidate. And I will say this, I've been very pleased in retrospect, I didn't realize it at the time, but they apparently had a lot of confidence in me. It was Reagan and me on the road, and us sitting there making policy decisions and one thing or another, driving along in the back seat of a car. [laughter]

Sharp: What kinds of policy decisions?

Nofziger: Well, a typical one I always remember is sitting in the car and saying to the governor, "Hey, I think it would be a good political move to say that you will only serve two terms. There ought to be a two-term limitation on the governor."

So we sat there, and I wrote a press release. I wrote a two-page speech insert, and he went out and gave the speech. He agreed, obviously. After he became governor we even introduced legislation to try to get a change in the constitution limiting the governor to two terms. It didn't pass, but we at least followed through on it.

Nofziger: It was a good issue because Pat Brown was out there running for a third term. A lot of people feel that a third term is too long.

So, there were those kinds of things. It was literally the candidate and the press secretary sitting in the back seat of a car, with the driver up in front, and we're going from Redding to Eureka, or someplace. You get to where you're talking issues. I would keep the headquarters informed of what we were doing, but literally a lot of the policy stuff that was coming out of that campaign was coming out on the road.

It wasn't me. It was the candidate and the press secretary talking, and the press secretary saying, "Hey,..."

Or, the candidate saying, "Well, why don't we do this, or so."

I wouldn't recommend it as a way to run a campaign, [laughter] but it seemed to have worked very well. But, as I told you before, my mother would have won that one. He was a unique candidate during a unique time frame.

Sharp: That's an important distinction, I think. I wanted to ask you if you think Reagan would have won without Spencer-Roberts.

Nofziger: He'd have won without Spencer-Roberts, Lyn Nofziger, or my mother. He'd have really had to kick that one away. The state was ready for a change, and he turned people on. He turned people on that year like nobody I have ever seen before or since.

I came back from my first road trip and said to Bill Roberts, "Hey, this guy could be president some day!"

And he said, "You're out of your mind! That poor soul--what will we ever do if he gets to be governor!" [laughter]

I'll never forget that. I said, "No, I'm dead serious. There's just something out there."

Sharp: It's a remarkable phenomenon.

Nofziger: He [Reagan] was.

You know the really great thing about it--and I don't know where you come from politically--in my estimation, he lived up to his promise. Nobody lives up to it a hundred percent, but he was as good a governor as we've had in this state. So I look back, and I don't feel badly at all. I've never kicked myself for having gone out and been a part of that.

Sharp: Who actually was in charge of the campaign from beginning to end?

Nofziger: Spencer-Roberts.

Sharp: But Reagan was making a lot of the policy decisions?

Nofziger: Well, you have policy and you have policy in a campaign. You have campaign policy that has to do with who runs this and that, and how you will structure a campaign, and who will be a county chairman, and what you will do in terms of rallying the troops, and getting out the vote, and putting together the organization, and all that.

Then you have policy in terms of what does the candidate stand for, and what does he say, and how does he say it.

The campaign policy on how to run the campaign was all Spencer-Roberts, and properly so.

The campaign policy on where does the candidate stand and what are his beliefs and what are his views was all Ronald Reagan. And he took some tough stands. He took some stands that his own people didn't like, and he took some stands that I'm sure cost him votes, but he was very firm in his convictions.

Sharp: Let's talk about the press now.

What was your relationship with the press during the campaign?

Nofziger: I think, very good. I had a couple of advantages. One, I was a Californian. I not only grew up here, but I worked here, so I'd been in the state. Secondly, I had been a reporter for sixteen years, so that I knew the needs of the press. They were aware that at least they had somebody who understood their problems.

Sure, I had a couple of shouting arguments, you always do, but I think that if you go check with the press of that time that you will find that our relationships were pretty good. None of them thought that I was lying to them, or trying to deceive them, or anything like that. I think they were good relations.

Sharp: We need to know some very matter-of-fact information, such as how the press conferences were arranged.

Nofziger: I told you I was a lousy press secretary.

Sharp: They weren't arranged?

Nofziger: You arrange a press conference by notifying the press that there will be a press conference at such and such a time. You ought to re-notify them a couple of times, but I don't think in those days I was smart enough to do that.

You set up a place, and you make sure that there are electrical outlets for the cameras, and all that. It's a pretty cut and dried thing.

We didn't really have a lot of formal press conferences because I frankly don't believe in them unless you have a point of view that you want to make. But I don't believe in holding press conferences just so the press can ask you questions.

So most of his dealings with the press were informal dealings. They'd catch him coming out of some place, or we'd be on the road and a few of them would say, "Hey, can we talk to the candidate?"

I'd say, "Sure." That sort of thing.

Sharp: How did Reagan handle sensitive questions from the press, on issues such as minorities, student unrest, or the war in Vietnam?

Nofziger: Well, the war in Vietnam was not really all that big an issue then. Remember, that was '66 and it was just beginning to grow as an issue. It certainly was not the issue that it was four years later.

How did he handle those things? That's a difficult question because you'd almost have to ask it on an issue-by-issue or even an incident-by-incident basis.

He's like most politicians. Sometimes he answers very well and sometimes he doesn't. Early on, before the campaign began, somebody had asked him about North Vietnam and he talked about how we ought to go in and pave it over and turn it into a parking lot. [laughter] I guess this came up to haunt him a time or two.

On race issues, you may have heard the story, or not. Early in '66 he spoke to a black Republican gathering over here at the Miramar Hotel. George Christopher was there, and William Penn Patrick was there. They were both needling him a little bit and trying to put him over in the corner as being a redneck racist. He was very tired that day. He'd had the flu and been down in bed for a week. He'd gotten up and we'd run him around the state for three or four days and he came back.

Finally, I think it was Bill Patrick who said something--I've forgotten what it was--that very clearly implied that Reagan was a racist. Reagan got up when it was his turn, and he was mad.

Nofziger: You ought to go check the L.A. Times story on it, if you haven't. But he talked about an incident in which a little black kid couldn't drink out of a white drinking fountain, and so forth. Anyway, he wound up by wadding up his program and throwing it on the floor and saying something about "those sons of bitches," referring really to Christopher and Patrick, and he stomped out. [laughter]

Unfortunately, I was in the audience and I got up and I followed him out. He got outside and he was muttering. I walked down the aisle with him and he was muttering profanities. I said [whispers], "Shut up, Ron, shut up." [laughter]

We were outside and he said, "Well, what do we do now?"

And I said, "Well, I think you better go home, while I figure out what we do."

So he got in the car with his driver and they went on home.

I went back in, and he had pretty thoroughly disrupted the meeting, as you can imagine. I talked to people, and they understood that he wasn't upset at the blacks, he was upset at what these guys [Patrick and Christopher] had said, and they all said, "You'd better have him come back." I said, "Well, I agree."

So I went and got in the car and drove up to his house and said, "Hey, I think we better go back."

So we went on back down. They were having receptions over there, and he went in and mingled and everything was all right, except there was a bad story in the paper the next day about how Reagan had lost his head. Conrad had a beautiful cartoon of Reagan standing there with his head under his arm, looking around saying, "Where's the rest of me?"

This just infuriated the Reagans. They wanted to go kill Conrad. I said, "No, call him up and ask him for an autographed copy."

Well, they wouldn't do that. [laughter]

Sharp: So during the campaign, sometimes you were a buffer between Mr. Reagan and--

Nofziger: Oh, you have to be. A press secretary serves many functions. His chief duty is to the guy he works for, which is something that the press sometimes forgets. But within that limitation, you do everything you can to serve the press.

Nofziger: You know, you go out on a presidential campaign and you've got about ninety-seven people with the candidate. But you go out on this gubernatorial campaign--in those days it was the candidate and me, plus a security man and a driver. So literally, you have to serve as a buffer because you're the only guy there.

Sharp: At least one political analyst, Roy Peel, has said that the reporters in California didn't really like Mr. Reagan, but accepted him because they were bored with Pat Brown.*

Nofziger: Well, I don't know that that's true. I'm sure they were bored with Brown.

Pat is a nice man, but the reporters looked upon him as a kind of buffoon. In a lot of ways, he was a typical old-time pol [politician]. He had said some things over the years that were very funny, such as when he went up to look at the results of the tidal wave and flood up in northern California, near Eureka. He came up there and he said, "This is the worst disaster since I was elected governor." [laughter]

So people quote those things. Or the time he said, when he was talking about the Dodgers and the Giants, who had just come out here, "I am looking forward to the day when these two teams meet in the World Series," forgetting they were both in the same league! [laughter]

Anyway, those kinds of things.

I don't think the press disliked Reagan. The thing you have to remember about Reagan is, he is not a typical politician. He is not a guy who sits around at the bar, and drinks with the boys and plays poker with the boys, and that sort of thing. You'd never find him at Frank Fat's in Sacramento, or anything like that.

I don't think the press disliked him, but I think they felt a certain aloofness there. There really isn't, it's just Ronald Reagan. He's not the kind of a guy who buddies up easily to other people, especially people whose job puts them a little at odds with him. He never thought he had any problems with the press, and as I look back, I never thought he had.

*See Roy Peel, "The California Elections of 1966" in John P. Carney and William M. Alexander, (eds.) California and United States Government, 1967.

Sharp: That was one of the questions I had. Having been a member of the press yourself, how do you think the press treated Reagan during the campaign?

Nofziger: The press treated him as well as they treat anybody else. The press is never, ever wholly objective or wholly fair, or wholly honest, or anything else. But I think most of the reporters try to be, and I have no complaints with the way the press has treated him over the years. Literally, I don't.

You can always go pick an isolated case where a guy wrote something that wasn't so, or wrote a lead when you thought it should have been down in the last paragraph, or something like that. But I don't know of any reporters who really consciously set out to get him.

Sharp: What was the role of the press in the campaign?

Nofziger: To cover the campaign. You've got to be more explicit than that. [laughter]

Sharp: Which newspapers supported him, and why?

Nofziger: Most of the newspapers did in the long run, in the general election. Even the L.A. Times I think finally came around and did. Why? You'd have to ask them.

Most small newspapers are Republican. Most large newspapers are not much of anything anymore. I think the large newspapers supported Reagan because they just felt that Pat Brown had run his course and was not a particularly good governor, and that Reagan offered something new and vigorous, and would be more pro-business, and more conservative in his spending, and that kind of thing. But I guess every newspaper has its own reason.

Sharp: This is an article that I got out of the San Francisco Examiner.* [holds up article]

Nofziger: It's a lie, it's a total lie.

Sharp: Well, we'll start with that. How does an article like this one get written? Do you meet with a reporter and give him information--

*This article is reprinted on the following pages.

The Candidates. and the Issues

REAGAN'S STATEMENT:

Let the People Build Society

The entire gubernatorial campaign this year is blanketed by one major issue — a general erosion of principle and morality in our state government. It has been evidenced by nepotism—the Governor's appointment of relatives to government jobs — by the awarding of lush contracts, by his failures to deal effectively with the causes of our racial unrest, by his ever-increasing attempts to centralize authority in Sacramento and by his current campaign of vilification and character assassination against me and my supporters.

A great, growing state such as California, with many problems to be met and solved, cannot afford a government run by hacks, cronies and relatives. It demands the best possible brains at every level.

No state can long endure the inefficiency and profligacy that has marked this administration and its fiscal policies. California needs an efficient, tightly-run government which aims to serve the people, not to rule them or intrude into their lives. It needs a frugal government which recognizes that the people are the source of government income and that the people's money must be spent wisely.

California has a university system second to none, but confidence in that system has been undermined by a Governor who has meddled politically and by a very few irresponsible students and instructors who have used the university as a breeding ground for anarchy. Confidence in the university must be restored. As Governor I would propose

immediately to ask John McCone to appoint a blue ribbon committee to look into the situation at Berkeley and report back to the Board of Regents with recommendations to restore confidence in that university.

California is a great industrial state, yet industry is actually leaving and we have sunk to thirteenth among states in our ability to attract new industry. Much of the problem is due to an unfriendly attitude toward business by this administration. As Governor I will work to end the unnecessary paper work and harassing state regulations and will urge repeal of the inventory tax that hurts so many of our industries—film, packing, garment, and others.

I will also work to provide a better understanding between labor and management. To this end I have proposed legislation giving union members the right to a secret ballot on all policy matters and other legislation that would set up a state Labor-Management Resources Act to provide mediation for labor-management disputes in areas not now covered by the National Labor Relations Board.

All in all, there is much to be done in California and much that can be done by a Governor who, instead of turning to Washington for help, turns to the people and leads them in building a creative society in which we rely on their genius, their abilities, and their desires to become active participants instead of merely bystanders, in the building of that society.

Reagan Replies

1
California has an old, tired administration that looks to Washington instead of to the people to solve the people's problems. It has concentrated state power in Sacramento instead of at the local levels. High level jobs are filled with hacks, cronies and relatives. Taxes and the cost of government have burgeoned out of all proportion to the increase in population.

As Governor I will turn to the people for help in solving their problems. I will stress economy in government and work to prevent further increases in the tax load. California needs a new approach to government. I offer that new approach.

2

The major issue of this campaign is the Governor's record. The Governor contends he has been a great Governor. I thoroughly disagree. Under his administration we lead in all the bad things — crime rate, unemployment rate, taxes, bankruptcies. Nearly every major problem that faced this state eight years ago still faces it.

3

To relieve racial unrest the Governor should throw all the prestige of his office into the work of alleviating its economic cause — lack of job opportunities. I have already proposed setting up Job Opportunities Boards in many areas that would work with government agencies to assure job training and placement for those who need them. In addition, the Governor should lead the fight for tolerance and understanding among our various racial groups and he should turn to the responsible leadership in those ethnic communities for help.

4

The greatest factor contributing to California's rising crime rate is the Governor's failure to recognize crime as a problem. He has opposed almost all legislation aimed at controlling or preventing crime. His approach has been that society, not the criminal, is responsible for the criminal's actions. As Governor I will seek passage of legislation restoring to the cities and counties those rights — preempted in recent years by the courts — to pass laws dealing with their local crime problems. I will seek legislation setting up a modern state police academy and crime laboratory to assure our people the best law enforcement possible and I will seek to establish a moral climate in California that recognizes the rights of the people are at least equal to the rights of criminals.

5

Many of the court decisions restricting law officers have to do with search and seizure, confessions and methods of obtaining evidence. Since these are judicial interpretations of the Constitution, there appears to be little that can be done about them at this time. Perhaps future courts will tip the balance back to the point where society also is assured equal protection from the criminal.

6

Regarding the property tax burden, which under this administration has become confiscatory, I will institute a study of California's entire outmoded tax structure with one of the prime purposes being to find a more broadly based substitute tax to take the burden off the property owner so once again the family on a fixed income can afford to live in a home of its own.

7

As I said in reply to Question 6, I will institute a study by the best tax brains in California aimed at reforming our entire tax structure.

8

a) — First of all, California should return to its traditional 50 percent share of the cost of school districts. Under this administration this support has dropped to as low as 27 percent in some areas, thus placing heavy extra burdens on the taxpayers. In addition I would seek legislation removing the compulsory aspects of school district unification (unification is only good in some areas and under some conditions; it is not a panacea for the problems facing our schools).

b) — The present Governor has injected politics into the operation of the university. I would make certain there is no political interference with the university by my administration and I would try to appoint regents who would be above meddling in politics at the state level.

9

I would hope at the soonest possible moment to set up a commission to redefine our welfare goals and restate the aims of our welfare programs. Certainly some legislation would be needed to implement my new proposals. In the meantime, much could be done to simplify welfare procedures at the state level, thus giving welfare workers more time to do their jobs. The Job Opportunities Board, mentioned in answer to Question 3, is aimed directly at alleviating our welfare problems.

10

The transportation crisis in our urban areas has been nearly studied to death. It is time now to implement these studies. However, I believe it is up to the residents of these areas to vote on the proposals and on the methods of financing them. I do not believe that the people of, say, Fresno, should be made to help pay for a transportation system in Los Angeles. At the same time, I would seek to grant localities more say over the location of freeways.

11

I strongly believe significant reductions can be made in the cost of California's government. Last April I proposed saving of \$240 million by cutting welfare costs (without taking a person off welfare rolls) by cutting the budgets of transportation, resources development, corrections, fiscal affairs, etc. The budget is the Governor's budget, and he, not the legislature, has to do most of the cutting. The Governor's budgets of the last seven years could all have

12

I am not certain that racial governmental bodies are the answer to our area-wide problems. Generally speaking, formations of such bodies should be left to the local governments involved. Just what the powers of such bodies should be should be decided by a thorough study. In each case, I suspect, different problems will call for different degrees and areas of authority.

The San Francisco Examiner invited the two candidates for Governor of California to answer 12 questions covering the major issues of the campaign. Each candidate was asked to reply to each question in from 100 to 150 words. Additionally, each was invited to submit a statement of his own on subjects not specifically covered in the questions we asked.

Questions

—1—

Briefly, why do you think Californians would be better served with you, rather than your opponent, as Governor?

—8—

What, if any changes, will you propose in California's state government's participation in:

- (a) Elementary and High Schools?
- (b) University of California and state colleges?

—9—

Both of you have recommended certain changes in California's welfare system. Specifically, how will you bring these about?

—10—

Briefly, what would you do to relieve the transportation crisis in California's urban areas?

—11—

Do you believe any significant reductions can be made in the cost of California government? If so, specifically where will you make them?

—12—

Much concern has been expressed over the difficulty of solving area-wide problems in our mobility and metropolitan urban areas. Will you propose some sort of regional governmental bodies to sit on such matters? If so, what would be their composition and their powers?

—2—

What do you consider the greatest issue of this campaign and, precisely, where do you and your opponent differ on it?

—3—

Since racial unrest is a vital problem in California, specifically what should the next Governor do to relieve it?

—4—

What is the greatest factor contributing to California's crime problem and what will you do about it?

—5—

Do you feel anything should be done to alter the restrictions imposed on law enforcement officers by recent court decisions? If so, specifically what will you do?

—6—

Will you do anything to relieve the local property taxpayers burden? If so, specifically what?

—7—

Briefly, what other tax reforms, if any, will you propose?

BROWN'S STATEMENT:

Progressivism Plus Experience

The long campaign now is virtually over and it is a time for summing up and action by the voters.

I have laid out the broad outlines for a "working society" to maintain this State's pre-eminent position in education, employment, industrial development and recreation.

My record, my principles and my programs are clearly stated. I have spent 23 years in the service of the people of California as District Attorney, Attorney General and Governor.

I have dedicated myself to the social and economic principles of men like Hiram Johnson and Earl Warren and Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy and Johnson.

The choice facing the voters is a simple one. Shall we continue the progressive, moderate tradition of government based on experienced leadership, or shall we turn government over to a totally inexperienced man whose beliefs and principles have wavered wildly from the extreme left during his Hollywood career to the far right as a Goldwater conservative?

As a paid lecturer for a giant corporation, Mr. Reagan campaigned militantly against Medicare, calling it "socialized medicine." He describes Federal aid to education as a "tool of tyranny." He would destroy Social Security by making it "voluntary." He would stop the development of State parks and he opposes the Redwood National Park.

He has offered no plans for moving this State ahead, saying he does not want to "get mired down in specifics."

I ask the voters of this State to study the records, the qualifications and the programs of the two candidates.

I ask you to make your decision based on facts and reason, laying aside emotion and those ~~scare~~ appeals to fear which would divide and destroy our society.

This State has a long and noble tradition of moderation and of dedication to the principles of equal opportunity and equal justice.

I pledge to maintain and strengthen that tradition, to give you government that is honest, economical and compassionate.

Brown Replies

1

The answer in one word is experience. I have spent almost my entire lifetime in public office, as District Attorney of San Francisco, Attorney General of California for two terms and two terms as Governor.

Mr. Reagan, on the other hand, has spent his life making movies.

He has no experience in government and simply does not know California problems nor has he offered any solution. In addition, he does not represent the moderate Republican mainstream of men like George Christopher and Tom Kuchel.

2

The state's number one problem is meeting the needs of our people and maintaining the good life in California in the face of continuing population growth.

Our first order of priority for the future is to reform the state's tax system, particularly with a view to easing the burden on the local property taxpayer.

I have pledged myself to presenting the next session of the Legislature with a comprehensive tax reform package which will achieve this urgent requirement.

Certainly, the way not to achieve relief for the average taxpayer is to pile on more sales taxes or to impose hidden taxes such as tuition fees at the state colleges and university. That is where I differ from my opponent.

3

First, let me make it clear that solutions will not come out of violence, and violence will be met with firm restraint.

But we must get at the root causes of social unrest: Unemployment, poor education, discrimination, delinquency and family breakups.

In every one of those fields we have government working with private enterprise and private institutions with specific programs.

I'll mention a few: Manpower Development Training programs, compensatory education, multi-service centers in poverty areas, special youth employment programs, and skill centers for retraining unemployable persons.

4

Increased crime is a world-wide phenomenon, especially in the big cities. There are many reasons for the causes but the important thing is what we are doing about it.

Let's look at the statistics first. The FBI Uniform Crime Report of 1963 shows that California has had the smallest increase in violent crime of all the major states from 1960 through 1963.

In addition, the FBI report proves that crime in relation to population growth has risen almost twice as fast nationally as it has in California.

We have enacted the nation's toughest narcotics laws, tightened controls on firearms and dangerous drugs and stiffened penalties against those who incite violence.

We have ended prison overcrowding and provided the nation's most extensive peace officer training, and done much more.

5

I believe that law enforcement officers must be given every protection and every assistance to carry out their duties; and that the courts and constitutional rights must be upheld, whether an individual citizen agrees with a decision or not.

The record of law enforcement in this state indicates there is nothing to fear from court decisions. J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, himself has called on law enforcement officers to work within the framework of the court decisions.

The key to better law enforcement is more scientific crime detection and apprehension systems and better trained policemen. In California we are achieving that objective.

6

I have proposed a state-federal sharing of the federal income tax which would increase state revenue in California by at least \$500 million a year. The plan would bring substantial relief to local property taxpayers. I propose that about \$300 million of the added money go for assistance to local school districts; about \$200 million for school property tax relief, and about \$100 million to improve the quality of school programs.

Another \$100 million would go for additional local property tax reforms discussed in the following answer.

7

I propose complete elimination of the \$40 million tax on household property. I propose property tax relief amounting to \$40 million for low income elderly house-

holders and reform of the business inventory tax totaling about \$30 million. I would use the remaining money in the state-federal income tax sharing to balance state and local budgets, thus holding taxes down.

8

I will submit legislation in January to:

a. Make state funds available to allow all California children, on a local option basis, to start school at the age of four.

b. Raise state contributions to local schools to about 50 per cent of the total expenditures.

c. Extend current state limitations on class size in the first three grades to all grades in elementary school.

d. Modernize technical training in high schools to develop new and better teaching methods, to utilize educational television, and to develop model schools to demonstrate quality education programs and new and promising techniques.

I am also pledged, unlike my opponent, to maintain the tuition-free traditions of the University of California and the state colleges.

9

I have proposed a new Job Training and

Placement Program for the hard core unemployed to get able-bodied men and women off local welfare rolls.

Our job training and rehabilitation programs already are the most effective in the nation, but I propose to expand them with the goal that every employable Californian receiving assistance will become self-supporting. Under this plan, the state would assume the county's share of the maintenance support for trainees, providing an estimated \$5 million tax reduction for local property taxpayers in the first year alone.

10

Relentless population growth requires us to proceed with the most extensive freeway system in America. But if freeways are not coupled with mod-

ern, efficient mass transit in our major urban areas, we will face mounting congestion, air pollution and destruction of scenic resources. Providing such facilities is primarily a responsibility of local government. But the governor should help, and I have done so. This administration enacted the legislation

to move ahead on Bay Area Rapid Transit.

11

This administration has already saved the taxpayers millions of dollars through strict economy in government operations, and such streamlining procedures as the reorganization of the executive branch. The agency plan, which I proposed and put into practice, has cut down significantly in the overlapping and duplication of various boards.

12

I believe that many urban area problems today lend themselves to regional solutions, and I am pleased to see the cooperative work of influential regional associations such as the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Southern California Association of Governments. I believe these groups should be encouraged and strengthened in their roles. In some areas of activity local governments may want to give them further responsibility, but such decisions must come from the local level.

Nofziger: No, this kind of a thing, they would write to the campaign and say, "We're going to do a page on the candidate. Will you give us a statement of your beliefs and policies?"

They might say, "Cover these certain areas."

Here I can see what they did. They sent us a list of questions, "Please answer these questions."

So these were answered.

Usually what happens is that the speechwriter, or the researchers, or together, somebody writes it, knowing what the candidate generally thinks, and then it is run by the candidate. He would take a look at it. I don't suspect either Reagan or Brown wrote these answers.

Sharp: But sometimes you would work on them and write them?

Nofziger: Oh, sure. But I can't tell you that I did this.

Sharp: No, that's just a representative article.

Nofziger: But I might well have. We had some very good researchers. We would sit down together, when I would be back in town, and we would work on position papers and issues. So it was very probable that something like this came in. We were very limited, as I look back, in the press-p.r. area. I would never want to campaign that way again.

Sharp: You mean you didn't have enough staff?

Nofziger: No, we didn't have enough staff. Let me repeat. We won that election for one reason, and that's Reagan. I kid you not.

This article is probably something, I can imagine, that the researchers and I sat down and worked on. I probably did a draft from their information, and we probably went over it, and we probably did another thing, and we probably showed it to the governor, or to the candidate, and he made any minor changes. Then we would go ahead and mail it back up. These things come in by the dozens, and you wind up with a pretty standardized thing.

Sharp: But Mr. Reagan would trust you to go ahead and make the draft because he knew that you knew what he wanted to say?

Nofziger: Oh, sure. We had been over policy statements. We knew where he was politically. Hell, I'd been out there listening to his speech until I could recite it by heart, and I'd been talking to him and talking to him.

One, I'm not going to go out there and say anything I'm not sure of. Two, if we come into an area that I don't know, but I think I know his general views, I might write it, but he's going to see it. We're not going to send out something that people think are his views, and are his views, without having him take a look.

But, you know, if he were doing this [writing articles] he wouldn't have time to do anything else.

Sharp: Did Mr. Reagan come across well on television?

Nofziger: Magnificently. The best television candidate in the history of television. He is today, no question about that.

Sharp: What do you think the role of the t.v. media and the press is in a campaign?

Nofziger: Well, you are talking about two or three different things. If you're talking about t.v. as an arm of the news media, then obviously they are no different from the writing press as far as what they ought to do, which is to present the candidates and where they stand, and what they're like.

But if you are talking about television as an instrument of communications, then it has several different functions. It has the news function of disseminating news about the candidates, but the candidate, if he is smart, will use the news media--whether it be television or others--to get across his views, and where he is, and a kind of a picture of himself he wishes to give to the people.

But then you've got the paid media, anywhere from thirty-second spots, on up to buying a half hour of time. The function of television in that case is merely to be a transmission point from the candidate to the guy sitting in his living room.

Am I being at all clear?

Sharp: I think you're being very clear, and I'm getting a much better understanding of what your role really was.

Let's talk about your office. You said that you had a very small staff--is it even correct to talk about an office?

Nofziger: Oh, yes. Headquarters were in Los Angeles, on Wilshire Boulevard between Vermont and Normandy. In that headquarters I had a little office and a little area. I had a girl who was a combination secretary, and other things, and I had a guy who primarily did radio things and also did some routine press release writing.

Up north we had a smaller office. There was one press person in there who primarily handled queries from the northern California press. That was in the primary. By the time of the general [election] we'd fired the guy up north and hired a very competent woman up there, and we ran with the same size shop down in southern California. Occasionally we had some volunteer reporters in who were on our side and said, "We'll come in and do some writing for you."

[the following passage was added by Mr. Nofziger to the transcript upon his review]

There was a volunteer lady who was a superb secretary and very competent. After the primary she travelled on the campaign as a press aid. This allowed us to get press releases out on the road.

[transcript resumes]

It [the staff] was very small, very inadequate. As I look back at the things that, even with the staff I had, I could have done, and didn't, and look at what we might have done if they'd given me just a couple more people, I kind of weep. It doesn't make any difference, because we won, and won overwhelmingly, and maybe what we would have done wouldn't have made any difference. You have to remember, I'd never been a press secretary before! [laughter] It was a learning experience for both the candidate and the press secretary.

Sharp: It was obviously an effective learning period.

Campaign Financing and Spending

Sharp: Let's talk about what may be a sensitive issue, and that's campaign financing.

What can you tell us about the structure of campaign financing for the 1966 campaign?

Nofziger: The structure of campaign financing as I know it, and I could be wrong, consisted of two things. There was a big donors thing--people like Holmes Tuttle, whose importance cannot be over estimated, by the way, and Henry Salvatori.

In the general, you had the addition of people like Leonard Firestone, who had not been with us in the primary--people who were raising money in large chunks.

In addition, there was a lot of fund raising by putting on events--receptions, dinners, and so forth.

The amazing thing to me, in retrospect, is that, as far as I know, there was no direct mail. There was no little donor fund-raising effort.

##

There was none of that. It's incredible to me, in retrospect. It wasn't incredible to me then. I just knew those guys were raising enough money. This is not a criticism of them, because what they did was tremendous.

Sharp: Were you in constant contact with the CRA (California Republican Assembly)?

Nofziger: The California Republican Assembly? No. We were in some contact with them because they were supporters of Reagan; both they and UROC (United Republicans of California) endorsed him. But, once again, they didn't play a role in the area I was in. They would have played a role as workers out there in the grass roots, as county level workers, and that sort of thing, individual members. They did not play a major leadership role in the campaign.

Sharp: Were they important as money raisers?

Nofziger: No, the CRA is not, and has never been, a money-raising organization. They are made up primarily of grass roots workers, middle and lower income Republicans. There aren't a hell of a lot of really rich Republicans in CRA. They belong to the Lincoln Club.

Sharp: Mr. Christopher asked California lobbyists for funds. Did Mr. Reagan?

Nofziger: I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised, but that I don't know. Literally. I'm not trying to be evasive. I just don't know that. I'm sure that if you would go check the rolls of people who bought tickets to the dinners you'll find California lobbyists and California industry there all over the place.

Sharp: So they may have supported that way?

Nofziger: Sure.

Sharp: Do you know anything about out-of-state contributors?

Nofziger: No. I'm trying to think, sometimes you get confused. There were out-of-state contributors to Max Rafferty's campaign. I don't know of any in this campaign, but there must have been. Certainly, if I'm Holmes Tuttle, I'm not going to limit myself to California, if I can raise some money somewhere else. I don't know that he did, but I would be very much surprised--But they [out-of-state contributors] weren't significant in terms of total contributions.

Sharp: Do you think industries in California who anticipated a new administration, especially a Republican one, wanted to influence Reagan?

Nofziger: You show me a lobbyist or an industry that doesn't want to influence a candidate, and I'll show you a guy who isn't going to be in business very long. Of course they wanted to influence him. Absolutely.

Sharp: Do you know of specific contributions by the oil industry in California?

Nofziger: Well, as I told you, Cy Rubel was a part of that thing. I'm sure that money came in from them, but you'd have to check the record.

As far as I know, and I think Reagan would tell you this, nobody ever came to him--certainly not in my presence--and said, "We'll give you money if--"

If you knew Holmes Tuttle, I think that you would find that if somebody came to Holmes Tuttle and said, "We will give you money if--," he'd have said, "Go stick it!"

Really. I can't conceive of Holmes Tuttle selling his candidate.

Sharp: That brings up a very important question. What is the relationship between the Republican party and big industries, like the oil industry in California?

Nofziger: But you see, you are twenty years out of date. Big industry probably gives more money to Democrats today than it does to Republicans. Big industry, if you want an honest opinion, is a

Nofziger: whore. Big industry goes to where it thinks the power is, regardless of power. Big industry works very closely with big government because they feed off of each other. And big business is not necessarily Republican any more.

Sure, I'm sure that big oil probably goes to both candidates. Unfortunately, we have the albatross of big business around our neck without ever having the benefits of what big business could do for you. [laughter]

You ought to go look at what the business PACs [political action committees] give. They give more to Democrats than they give to Republicans. Have been for the last four years that I know of. Big business is not Republican any more. Surprisingly, the strength of the Republican party is little business. People in the mid-level economic strata. People who make somewhere from \$20,000 up to--But they are salaried people or they are small business people. They are not the big bankers, they are not the big oil people, necessarily.

It doesn't mean that they are all Democrat, but there are as many Democrats out there as there are Republicans, because they don't stand for anything except making a buck. [laughter]

Sharp: How were the campaign funds allocated, and who made the budget decisions?

Nofziger: They were made jointly by the fund raisers, Holmes Tuttle and those people, and Spencer-Roberts. I can remember fortunately watching them but not participating because it wasn't my job. There were some very tough arguments on how money should be spent.

Sharp: Can you outline some of the problems?

Nofziger: Well, I can't specifically. I just remember being there and watching Stu Spencer and Bill Roberts get very mad because they couldn't spend money, and demanding to spend it, and the other guys getting mad because they think the money shouldn't be spent there. But I can't name any specifics.

Sharp: Was Reagan at these meetings?

Nofziger: No.

Sharp: That was not his area?

Nofziger: You keep the candidate doing his thing, which is campaigning. To get him mixed up in things like arguments over how money will be spent, or what the organization is, or who will be the county chairman, or something, is wrong. You've got to keep him above that, and you've got to keep him away from that because he's the guy, who when it's all over and done, unifies you and brings you all back together again. You just don't want him mixed up in that kind of nonsense.

Sharp: Did you have any trouble paying your bills?

Nofziger: Who, me or the campaign? [laughter] I always have trouble paying my bills--

Sharp: The campaign.

Nofziger: No, not that I know of. Once again, that's something you'd have to talk to Stu and Bill about. I never heard of any problems paying bills. I just can't conceive that there were any.

Sharp: Did there seem to be more money in California available for a conservative Republican campaign than a moderate one?

Nofziger: I'm sure that's true, if you want to call Reagan a right-winger, which he will not do. But there was more money in California for a conservative candidate. There was more money for Reagan than there was for Christopher, no question about that.

Sharp: I've already interviewed George Christopher on the 1966 campaign. He makes definite statements about his lack of campaign funds.

Nofziger: I believe that. I think he probably had a tough time raising money. One, the smart people didn't think he could win, and it's always tougher to raise money when people don't think you can win. And two, the big money in California, the big political money that gives, was behind Reagan, no question about that.

Sharp: In mid-March 1966, an amendment to a federal tax bill banned deductions by corporations for advertisements in political publications. Did this have any adverse effect on your campaign?

Nofziger: I don't know. I just don't know. I suppose it did. Anything that limits your ability to raise money and spend it is going to affect a campaign, but obviously, it didn't. Any adverse effects were shared by the other candidates.

Sharp: The IRS scrutinized the books of the public relations firms in California during the campaign. Do you know anything about this--the reason for it or the effect?

Nofziger: You'd have to talk to Bill and Stu.

There are just some questions you are asking me that are not in my area.

Sharp: Oh, I know. We didn't know how broad your area was, or what all your role as press secretary entailed.

Nofziger: Well, keep asking, but you're getting into some areas that I just don't have answers for. I don't want you to think that I'm not being forthcoming. I just don't know.

Why Reagan Won in 1966

Sharp: After the election was over, it was said that Reagan won for three reasons: because Reagan had lots of time and lots of money, because he didn't make any mistakes, and because he cultivated successfully the citizen politician image. Do you agree with those three reasons?

Nofziger: Well, I'm not sure those are three of the reasons. I think the main reason that Reagan won was because, as I told you, he was a candidate who not only had a unique appeal to the people, but that unique appeal fitted uniquely into a time structure--into a period of time when people were looking for something, and he happened to fit what they were looking for.

The reason Ronald Reagan was elected governor was because he was Ronald Reagan, being Ronald Reagan at a time when the people wanted something like Ronald Reagan. You can give all the other reasons that you want, but I go back to what I said at the beginning. My mother could have run his campaign and he'd have won. He could have cultivated the citizen politician thing or not cultivated it, that didn't elect him.

True, usually the candidate who makes the fewer mistakes wins, and Ron made the fewer mistakes.

Additional Thoughts on Role as Press Secretary

Sharp: As press secretary, did you work with this citizen politician image and attempt to use it in the press?

Nofziger: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Pushed it all the time. You bet.

What we were saying was that Pat Brown's a hack politician who has surrounded himself with hacks and cronies, and appointed political hacks to jobs. We're offering you a new approach which is a guy who's not a politician, but is a citizen coming in and saying, "Okay, I've got to serve my state because it's been good to me, and we will come in with a citizen's approach to this. We will serve the citizens instead of the politicians."

It was a good, effective approach against a guy who had spent all his life in politics. What they were saying is, "Ronald Reagan is innocent. He doesn't know anything about politics. He doesn't know anything about government. He doesn't know anything about running anything. He's never been there."

And we were saying, "Well, the trouble with Pat Brown is that he's been governor too long."

It was a political strategy. But I don't think that that in itself elected Ronald Reagan.

Sharp: Who were Mr. Reagan's most important advisors during the campaign?

Nofziger: Besides me? [laughter]

Sharp: That's already been answered for the past hour!

Nofziger: There used to be meetings at his house every week or two, and the people who were usually there were Homes Tuttle, and Henry Salvatori, and Bill Roberts, and Stu Spencer, and Phil Battaglia, and myself, and Tom Reed, if he were down from northern California. If I have left anybody out, God forgive me, I didn't mean to. There may have been somebody else there, but that basically was the policy group. Ed Mills was probably there on some of it, but it was usually that group of people.

Sharp: And they would talk over the progress of the campaign, what was happening--

Nofziger: And what we ought to be doing, and that sort of thing.

Sharp: And Mr. Reagan chaired these meetings?

Nofziger: Well, if you know Ronald Reagan, he sat and listened. He's a very good listener. After he's heard everything he may ask some questions, or he may decide that a decision should be made differently from what looks like is going to be made. He was there and he participated, and he agreed. When he didn't agree, he said so.

Sharp: What was Mrs. Nancy Reagan's role throughout the campaign, and what was your relationship with her?

Nofziger: Mrs. Reagan is a very important part of Ronald Reagan's political career. She's a very important part of his life. She is a pretty good politician. She campaigned where asked to, either with him, or separately, and did a lot of that. As I look back, we didn't serve her well, press wise.

Sharp: What do you mean by that?

Nofziger: We didn't do the amount of press preparation and press coverage for her that we should have. I kid you not.

My relations with her were cordial.

Sharp: Did Mr. Reagan have a philosophical approach to state government?

Nofziger: Oh, yes. Absolutely. He felt that government should be cut, felt that government could be cut, felt that spending could be limited, felt that taxes could be cut, felt that government interferes too much in people's lives.

Sharp: When you were driving along, say from Brawley to another city, and he would talk with you, is this how that philosophy developed?

Nofziger: Oh, no. That philosophy was pretty well developed before I got there.

He had developed this philosophy during the fifties and early sixties when he was making speeches for the General Electric people, and early on, as he had been the president of the Screen Actors Guild, and had coped with the problems there. All those activities had helped to develop a philosophy. It was not a sudden developing thing.

He almost always had a question and answer session. So, people ask you questions and you give the answers, and I guess you begin to sharpen and define your philosophy.

Sharp: When did he become a Republican?

Nofziger: Oh, he campaigned for Eisenhower--I think it would have been about '62. He was supporting Nixon--Now you'd better go back and check, but I'm sure it was with Nixon that Nixon said, "Well, I wish you'd go ahead and stay a Democrat. You'll help me better as a Democrat."

Nofziger: He had become a Republican in philosophy I suppose in the middle fifties. But he actually changed his registration, I think it was in 1962.

Sharp: When the election was over, did you feel that you really knew Mr. Reagan because of your job as press secretary?

Nofziger: Well, you know, it's a funny thing about Ronald Reagan. You sit there, you know him, and I spent a lot of time with him there, and I always felt for a long time that there was a kind of a veil between him and the rest of the world. You could never really get in next to him.

I finally decided, after he became governor and time had gone by, that what you saw was what you got. That you had, in fact, the real Ronald Reagan. That he had become a little aloof, a little careful because, as an actor, with all the publicity, and people after you, you have to guard your private life very carefully if you are going to maintain a private life. I think that he just naturally had built a kind of a fence between him and the outside world. I'm not even sure that he would say this, I'm not sure that he believes this.

I used to think: Well, gee, there is a little something there.

I don't feel it any more. It may be because I've gotten used to him. It may be because as he's been more in political life and less in the film industry, it has vanished.

Sharp: That's very interesting.

How did you see your function after the election was over?

Nofziger: We all make one mistake. My mistake was not going back to the newspapers.

He was elected and the big question is, okay, what do we do now? Clearly, as you go to put together an administration and a government, there has to be a press operation to handle the queries from the press, and [answer about] who's being appointed to what. Somebody has got to get out the press releases, and somebody has got to schedule the press conferences, and somebody has got to be a spokesman for the administration.

You know, you become, in this business, if you're halfway competent and if you have halfway the confidence of the man you're working for, not so much a mechanic as a spokesman.

Nofziger: Anybody can put on a press conference if you tell them what ought to be done. You can find a lot of people to write a press release. You can find a lot of people to do research and even to write speeches.

But you've got to be careful that the spokesman for the candidate or the officeholder is somebody who understands how far he can go and who understands what he can say on behalf of the person he works for. [He has to] understand when he is speaking for himself and not for the candidate, and understand when he should be on the record or off the record, and all those kinds of things.

So, you wind up, really, as a voice for the officeholder or the candidate when he can't speak for himself, when he's unavailable. So that's what your role becomes, basically.

Sharp: Then that's a position of a great deal of trust on the part of Mr. Reagan?

Nofziger: Yes. But he has to have confidence [in you], or if he doesn't, then he'd better get rid of you.

We all make mistakes. I said things that I shouldn't have, and he said things that he shouldn't have. There has got to be a kind of mutual trust and a mutual understanding of where you're coming from.

Sharp: I wonder if there was some aspect of your role as press secretary that I haven't covered that you'd like to say something about, or your relationship with Mr. Reagan.

Nofziger: Well, we've just been talking about the campaign, we've not been talking about anything else.

As I look back on it, as I told you, there was much that a press operation should have done that it didn't do. But the thing that I have found, in retrospect, was that the job of the press secretary in the first Reagan campaign was unlike that of any press secretary I have seen before or since. We were out there pretty much alone. It was not the role primarily of a spokesman--although it should have been, that was part of it. It became the role of an advisor and of a person helping [to] make policy, and so forth.

I'm not trying to set myself up as somebody who went out and ran the candidate, or told him what to do or what to say. But I think it was different because most candidates in major campaigns have more people around them like that when they are on the road. Our entourage was a very small one.

Nofziger: I remember one time we'd come back from a road trip. Reagan had to go down and speak to a new citizens gathering--people who'd just become citizens. Christopher was going to be there. I said to Bill Roberts, "I'm tired, nothing's going to happen down there, I don't think I'll go."

He said, "You'd better go."

I went down there, and [George] Christopher got up to speak first and he took off on Reagan. A personal attack. Incredible. Reagan was so mad he couldn't see straight. He [Reagan] does have a temper. He wanted to go hit him [Christopher]. [laughter]

I was saying, "But you can't do that!"

[Reagan said,] "Well, by God, you don't know how I feel!"

I was saying, "Well, you just can't do it."

He said, "Well, if I can't hit him, let me go find Arch Monson, I'll hit him!"

Arch Monson was George's campaign manager. [laughter]

He [Reagan] finally cooled off, but I just have often wondered what he would have done if he'd been there all alone, with nobody to talk it out with. It was funny, because he got up later, and I was worried. But he got up and he made the most beautiful speech you've ever heard to these people, about how your country is not losing children, but we're gaining--We walked out of there and he looked at me and laughed, and he said, "Oh ye of little faith." [laughter]

I don't know whether those kind of incidents are part of this history, but I remember the [Pat] Brown people put out a Brown movie. You may have heard about it. In it Brown patted the head of a little black kid and said, "Ha, ha. You know it was an actor who shot Lincoln."

We were up in San Francisco--Ron was speaking to the Commonwealth Club up there--and some reporters came up to me. They weren't quite sure what had happened, but they said, "Have you heard about this statement that Brown made, that it was an actor who shot Lincoln?"

I said, "No."

Reagan was off getting ready to speak.

Nofziger: The reporters said, "Yes, what does Reagan think about it?"

I said, "He hasn't heard about it."

So I went and found him up at the head table. I went up and got him aside and I said, "Brown apparently has said something to the effect that it was an actor who shot Lincoln. I think you ought to play it very cool. Don't get mad or be shocked about it."

He said, "Don't worry, don't worry."

He finished his speech and came off and the press grabbed him. One of them said, "Have you heard that Pat Brown said that it was an actor who shot Lincoln? What do you think?" Reagan said, "Pat said that? Why I couldn't believe that. Pat wouldn't say anything like that. I wouldn't want to comment on that until I heard further."

And off we go. I said, "Well, you at last won an academy award--"

He said, "Shush, reporters may be listening." [laughter]

Those are the things you remember about a campaign.

Sharp: Well, we need to have those remembrances because we have to put all the pieces of the campaign together. I think you have enriched what we know considerably.

Nofziger: I hope so. I'm available if I can be helpful. I'm not looking for any publicity. If I can be helpful, you just call.

Transcriber: Catherine Scholten
Final Typist: Marilyn White

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Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Gaylord B. Parkinson

CALIFORNIA REPUBLICAN PARTY OFFICIAL,
1962-1967

An Interview Conducted by
Sarah Sharp
in 1978

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

In many ways Dr. Parkinson is an example of the model interviewee. Not only did he hold important executive positions within the Republican party in California at critical moments in the 1960s, but he also has been an articulate and candid participant in the Goodwin J. Knight-Edmund G. Brown, Sr. portion of the Governmental History Documentation Project. He is probably best known for authoring the so-called "Eleventh Commandment" during the pre-primary period of the 1966 gubernatorial campaigns in California. Dr. Parkinson issued this dictum as chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. However, his earlier positions in California's Republican party network, and his later role on the national committee of Nixon for President in 1968 were also critical expressions of his political service.

Besides Dr. Parkinson's political side, he is a gynecologist and obstetrician practicing in El Cajon, California, a city just southeast of San Diego. Our one intense interview session was held on a rainy November afternoon in his suite of offices. His own private office, with the walls covered with medical diplomas and medical journals neatly stacked on the floor, seemed an unlikely place to discuss the inner workings of California's Republican party in the 1960s. Yet, his office was clearly a place in which Dr. Parkinson felt at ease in discussing his political past.

The hour-and-one-half session passed quickly because of the interesting comments and the rapid speaking style which Dr. Parkinson had. He spoke openly about his own role in trying to help change the party in San Diego in the early 1960s and then on the state level once he became chairman in 1964. In assisting the development of the Republican Associates and the "Cal Plan," he began to knit together the same policy of unification of the party that later inspired his writing the "Eleventh Commandment."

The highlight of this too brief interview was Dr. Parkinson's discussion of the 1966 gubernatorial election in California and Ronald Reagan's relationship with the structure of the Republican party during his own campaign. Parkinson's own position as state central committee chairman gave him a unique vantage point from which to view this relative newcomer to the Republican party. The interview closes with Dr. Parkinson reflecting on the plight of the voluntary political party official and the private financial problems involved in such a position.

His busy medical practice did not afford Dr. Parkinson time to thoroughly review the transcribed copy sent to him, and he allowed us to print this copy without having made any revisions. Dr. Parkinson has

provided the Knight-Brown project with a fascinating review of the Republican party in California and the nation in the 1960s. This review includes analysis of his own role as well as that of Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon in the party in those formative years.

Dr. Sarah Lee Sharp
Interviewer-Editor

18 June 1980
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

I BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

[Date of Interview: November 21, 1978]##

Sharp: The first set of questions that I have for you, Dr. Parkinson, are some biographical ones. One of the first things we would like to know is where you were born, and something about your family.

Parkinson: I was born in Chicago, and all my folks came from western Illinois. I lived in Michigan for a few years, but came out here to San Diego in 1928, and went through the schools here in San Diego and graduated from San Diego State College in 1940.

Sharp: What were your parents' names?

Parkinson: Parkinson, Gaylord B., same as mine, was my dad's. He was a real estate broker here, who is now deceased, and my mother was Helen Simpson Parkinson. They were married in Chicago, right before World War I. I have one brother who lives here in California also and that's the only family. My wife died about ten years ago, and I have three boys--thirty-two, thirty, and twenty-eight.

Sharp: What are their names?

Parkinson: The oldest is Gaylord B., III, and the middle is Peter Riley Parkinson, and the youngest is Christopher John Parkinson.

Sharp: And what was your wife's name?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 57.

Parkinson: Harriet Weber Parkinson. She was a native [Californian] and her mother taught school here for forty years, and she was a teacher also and graduated from San Diego State College the same time I did.

Sharp: So you went to public schools in San Diego. Did you have any religious influences in your family as a child?

Parkinson: Not particularly. My family was Presbyterian, and [had] been Presbyterians at the same church for fifty years. I went to the First Presbyterian Church here in San Diego for years. My wife was a Catholic and we didn't bring up our children particularly, religious wise.

Sharp: As a young boy, did you like school?

Parkinson: Oh, I loved it, loved school. I wanted to be an international lawyer, and so I collected autographs of world famous statesmen when I was growing up. I have quite an extensive collection of them, especially political figures--cabinet members, world leadership figures, and so forth. I was very interested in that.

Sharp: What books did you have around the house when you were a child, that you read in your family?

Parkinson: I was an avid reader and read everything I could get my hands on. I don't particularly think of anything special, except that along my line of wanting to be a physician, I read a book about Louis Pasteur. Gosh, I can't think of the author, very famous author. I used to read a lot of scientific books, and political books. I was a bookworm really for years and years.

Sharp: What is your career line? You graduated from grammar school, and then went to high school and--

Parkinson: I graduated from Francis Parker here [San Diego], which is a private school, which I had a scholarship to. I went through the sixth to the ninth grade there at Francis Parker; then I went to Point Loma High School. I graduated in '36, and graduated from State College in '40.

Sharp: And where did you go to medical school?

Parkinson: In Temple University medical school in Philadelphia. I wanted to be near a center of medical educational learning and history. William Oster, who came from England, was there for a while and I was very interested in medical history as well. At that time Philadelphia was the main center of medical practice in teaching in the United States--the oldest.

II REPUBLICAN ACTIVITIES BEFORE 1962

Sharp: The next set of questions, and this really will be the rest of the interview, concerns your Republican activities. I wanted to ask you first of all, what was your role in the Republican activities in California before 1962, before you actually became part of the bureaucracy of the Republican party?

The Introduction

Parkinson: Well, it started in Philadelphia, during the Alger Hiss case. I used to go down to Washington from Philadelphia to attend those hearings on the Committee on Un-American Activities, and the Alger Hiss case. I got very intensely interested in the case and met Mr. Richard Nixon, who was a congressman then, and his assistant at the time, Bob [Robert] Finch, his administrative assistant.

When I finished my residency, I came out to California and Mr. Nixon said, "For heaven's sakes, get interested in politics." So I reorganized the Young Republicans here in San Diego. Our first big endeavor was to get a congressman elected, which we did against the old guard here in the party. Bob [Robert] Wilson was our choice, and we pushed him and won--much to the surprise of the old guard here in San Diego.

Then we went for Johnny Butler for mayor. We just really felt our oats and we were a very active influence in the party here.

The Republican Associates

Parkinson: Then I got into my practice, and did less in politics for a while, but finally became very concerned that there were no businessmen in the party as a unit. So we organized what was called Republican Associates. This was a group of young businessmen and women, who elected a board, and the board hired a staff. We had a very active club here in town which was responsible for bringing most of the speakers here. It also helped raise money for all the candidates, because the county central committee, by its mere nature here in California (being elected by a lottery system), rarely had any power to do anything.

When we got active there was the one finance group here in San Diego, and there were all the volunteer organizations, which didn't really amount to much. So we got together and did some of our own fund raising and put on schools for candidates and did a lot of good in the party. Worked out mailing stickers for candidates and did a lot of things that the Democrats were already doing. We used computers and one thing or another. I became chairman of that group, as we organized it. That was a very active group. Still is here in town.

We hired a young man by the name of Robert Walker. Now, Bob Walker was the inspiration of the really resurgence of our party here. He was the executive director of the Republican Associates, as it built from a small group into twelve hundred members at one time--and dues-paying members. He, later on, became very prominent in politics. He was the head of my staff when I was state chairman, and went on to organize, in the Reagan campaign, the candidate campaign in the southern United States for Ronald Reagan for president. Right now he's working for Joe Coors, and is active in the Reagan drive for president, I'm sure.

Sharp: The Republican Associates? We've been very interested about the origins of that group. Was that meant to be a fund-raising group?

Parkinson: No, it was not. There was a fund-raising group here in town, made up of all the older members in the party--the very wealthy people. Our job was to do education, mostly, of the candidates and provide professional help to the candidates.

We would hire, for the candidate, a professional man to go into his district and work when he was running for the office after the primary. We actually felt that we should bring professionalism and business-like methods to the party, which it woefully lacked at the time, and we became rather prominent, rather quickly.

Sharp: So you saw yourself as really filling in a hole as far as the Republican party was concerned?

Parkinson: That's right, a professionalism which we didn't have here in San Diego, and which had been in existence in Los Angeles, with Stu Spencer and Bill Roberts.* Bob Walker had worked with Spencer-Roberts--had trained with them.

So when we got him, he produced that kind of expertise down here for our party. We began to pick up Republican assembly seats. Mr. Wilson, Pete Wilson, ran at one assembly district. Pete Wilson was originally hired by us as a political expert and he went into the district and helped the candidate, and so was John Stull. John Stull was hired by us. Later on they ran in that district themselves, and became very successful.

*Spencer-Roberts was a Los Angeles based political public relations firm which handled primarily Republican candidates.

III VICE-CHAIRMAN, REPUBLICAN STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, 1962

Sharp: That's very interesting. How did you get elected vice-chairman of the Republican party?

Parkinson: Well, one year it was obvious that the vice-chairman had to come from the southern part of the state. The party in Los Angeles was rent that year with a lot of factionalism. Bob Walker felt that by getting the cow counties organized, we could grab it away from Los Angeles. The southern vice-chairmanship had never been out of Los Angeles up to that point.

So by a lot of fancy footwork and visiting every county in the southern part of the state, and between the primary in June and the meeting in August [1962], we succeeded in getting enough votes to beat the Los Angeles city group, much to their chagrin. I was nominated and nobody could believe it, but it actually happened outside of Los Angeles for the first time.

Sharp: You were elected state vice-chairman at one of these biennial state Republican meetings that was held--

Parkinson: The state central committee meeting in Sacramento.

Sharp: What other kinds of business were taken care of at these biennial meetings?

Parkinson: Well, this was also the meeting where we established a platform and still do. The party establishes a platform and elects officers.

Now, that meeting used to be held between the primary and the general election, which was a disaster because generally one faction of the party would carry the candidates through the primary. Then came the meeting, and the whole change of officers, and perhaps philosophy. Then they had to pick up the candidates and carry them [the candidates] through the general election.

Parkinson: When I was chairman, finally, we succeeded in getting that changed. Now they meet in January after the final election. But this was part of the scheme that Hiram Johnson had put into effect to weaken the party structure back in the Progressive days. They [the Progressives] did many things to specifically weaken the party structure, and it was a long battle uphill to change a lot of those things. Finally, when I was chairman, we did get that changed through the legislature.

Sharp: That does make more sense to try to get the party unified. What was the state of the Republican party in 1962?

Parkinson: Well, we'd seen a curious thing happen. I think I probably would not have been nominated if we had had a majority of our candidates elected to office. But because we were down to a very few number, much fewer than we have now even, there were more nominees of the party than there were elected representatives after the primary.

Now, each elected representative and each nominee appointed members to the state central committee. Consequently the "out" people who were not elected had a majority for a very short time there in our party. I represented them. Those people I convinced. Even though the members appointed by the legislators wanted to vote another way, we had them outvoted. This was a curious moment right in the history of the Republican party.

The Democrats are, at this particular moment right now, changing their party because of that problem. You see, this was a way of incumbents keeping control of the party. When they were down to a very, very scant few, then the nominees, who weren't going to be elected, but who had gone to the primary, outnumbered them and then we were able to slip in there.

Sharp: What was the state of the party's finances?

Parkinson: It was actually--statewide, there was none. There was no unified state central committee. I was able, finally, as chairman, to get a unified state central committee, but the north and the south did not get together. San Francisco group had their own little "Cal Plan" working where they went out around the state and put money in different candidates.

The southern part of the state was all run by itself--every candidate ran his own. It was such a deplorable state that when the state chairman, when I was vice-chairman, wanted to come

Parkinson: south, he had to go to some friends and borrow money for them to pay his way to get down here.* There were literally no finances. I think a total of \$12,000 was their budget.

First year I was state chairman, our budget went from \$12,000 to \$100,000. It went up double that after I was there a few years, because we were able to raise the money. Before there had been no effort at statewide financing for the party at all.

Sharp: Did you go out seeking that money from industrial sources?

Parkinson: No, I convinced every county chairman, by paying attention to the county chairman, that each county should pay a quota of whatever budget we established.

It was a hard job, but we did it because we had a history, by that time, of winning four nominees at each of the two-year elections. They began to realize that the "Cal Plan" had something. Consequently, they were able to help us with the money. Each county had its quota for the first time. They had never established that before.

Sharp: As vice-chairman did you see your role as a party organizer or as a party fund raiser?

Parkinson: Well, actually, under Caspar Weinberger, who was chairman, I had no role at all. His philosophy was that you can ignore the vice-chairman and forget the whole thing. There was a lot of rivalry between the two of us. We were philosophically at opposite poles in the party, and I had had to ask him not to come out for me when I was vice-chairman, because of his quite liberal San Francisco role.

At that time, the conservatives were massing in the party, and I represented the more conservative wing, what would now be called the moderate wing.

But at that time his coming out for me was a kiss of death. We actually had threatened to go to court to get him not to run with me as a slate. He was passing petitions around. We had to

*This state chairman of the Republican State Central Committee was Caspar Weinberger.

Parkinson: stop that because I had the delegates down here without him and I did not need him to get elected. Consequently, when I became vice-chairman, he largely ignored me.

Sharp: What was the relationship between the United Republican Finance Committee and the Republican State Central Committee?

Parkinson: There was no united Republican finance of the state. There was the United Republican Finance [Committee] in Los Angeles. There was one in San Francisco. We had something like that in San Diego, but there was no statewide fund raising for the party. There was for candidates, but not for the party.

Sharp: I see. I didn't realize that was such a local thing.

Parkinson: The biggest one [finance committee] was in Los Angeles, which had been going on [for] years. I succeeded in getting them convinced that what I was doing would help them, as I had convinced the San Francisco group.

When we went down to visit Mr. [Dwight D.] Eisenhower in Palm Springs one time, for the first time, I got all the [California] financial managers together at one meeting. They finally all came together and met and agreed that yes, it was sensible to work together as a party, rather than north and south.

IV NIXON'S BID FOR GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, 1962

Sharp: Were you then involved in Mr. [Richard M.] Nixon's bid for the governorship of California in 1962?

Parkinson: Not as much as I would have liked to have been. I was largely ignored.

Mr. Nixon had Bob [H.R.] Haldeman running his campaign, and he had Bob Haldeman under his thumb. So Mr. Nixon was really running it. However, because of Mr. Nixon coming out for me in the state convention, it pretty well squashed any opposition from anywhere else for me becoming chairman.

There was a lot of dissention in the party at the time, and I was too conservative for many people and not conservative enough for the [John] Birchers. So, consequently, I was trying to maintain some sort of a middle-of-the-road [position]. Anybody that's in the middle of the road always can get shot at by both sides, but I felt I had the votes.

Mr. Nixon, in his talk, when he was running for governor, spoke before our convention in Sacramento and came out and practically endorsed me, and with that the opposition to me faded away. So I owe his help, really, for becoming chairman.

Sharp: Were you always friends with Mr. Nixon then in his early period?

Parkinson: I've been friends [with] and supportive of Mr. Nixon and still am, ever since he was first in Congress. I went around with a lot of his friends and became well acquainted in the Young Republicans.

That's interesting. The Young Republicans in the state were largely controlled by a very active group from USC--Joe Holt, Glen [Glenard P.] Lipscomb (who later became a congressman).

Parkinson: Quite a lot of fellows who all were at USC became active in politics and backed Mr. Nixon. I backed him when he ran for United States Senator. I was in charge of his campaign here in San Diego. So I've always been a Nixon man. He's the reason I'm in politics, and I've supported him all along.

V FACTIONS WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, 1962-1966

Sharp: Can you tell us more about the factions within the Republican party in California, from the '62 to '66 period?

Parkinson: When I became vice-chairman there was a growing beginning of the so-called conservative movement here. [Earl] Warren had left the state. Knowland was going down to defeat because of his transposition of chairs with Goodie Knight.

We were at the low ebb, probably the lowest the Republican party has ever been in the state, both vote wise, financial wise, and every other way. A conservative movement began which later coalesced around Mr. Reagan. But it was a conservative movement long before that, and probably saw its first fruition in the [Barry] Goldwater convention in San Francisco.

I was vice-chairman at that time, had very little to say about the state party, but generally the state party was run by the liberals from San Francisco because Cap [Caspar] Weinberger was state chairman and they were very close to Mr. [Thomas] Kuchel. Mr. Kuchel was a strong supporter of Mr. [Nelson] Rockefeller.

So I sat and agonized during that convention up there. I had very little to do, other than to try to restrain some of the ultra-conservatives in their vehemence and hold the party together. I was able to finally say, after Mr. Goldwater was defeated, that now I think we should understand that both factions of the party need each other, in order for us to win an election. We lost with Mr. Nixon because Joe [Joseph C.] Shell and the conservatives sat on their hands. We lost with Mr. Goldwater because the liberals sat on their hands.

So then when I became chairman my theme was that certainly conservatives learned after Goldwater that we needed the whole party, and certainly the liberals have learned after Mr. Nixon that we needed the whole party.

Parkinson: Incidentally, I was able to be endorsed by Mr. Shell and Mr. Nixon, which helped me when I became chairman. I was able to hold the factions together. My role, as I saw it, was to pull the party together and to convince both sides of the party that they need each other and a lot of Democrats to win anything here in the state. I was able to kind of knock a few heads together and produce some sort of semblance of order.

Sharp: So your role at the '64 national Republican convention that was held in San Francisco was pretty minimal.

Parkinson: Stay out of trouble. Pull the party together. Because I was vice-chairman I had absolutely no power at all. I wanted both sides to work for me for chairman.

Sharp: So the Goldwater and Rockefeller factions of the Republican party, nationally, really did have quite an effect on California.

Parkinson: Oh, they [these factions] were tremendously powerful in California. The southern part of the state generally was Goldwater; the northern part, generally Rockefeller. And mind you, a lot of the old party people in the small counties had been appointed by Kuchel and Warren and they were still there. I would go up into Sierra County and Siskiyou County and find them filled with Kuchel people, long after the Goldwater people had taken over the Republican party.

I felt my role was to pull everybody together and I came out with a so-called "Eleventh Commandment" which said, "Thou shalt not speak ill of any other Republican," especially in the primary. That way we were able to pull the party together.

VI PERIOD AS CHAIRMAN OF THE REPUBLICAN STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE,
1964-1967

Sharp: Now, the next set of questions concerns the period of your chairmanship of the Republican State Central Committee from '64 through '67. What did you see as your main function as chairman? I think you've already started to tell us about that.

Initial Remarks

Parkinson: First, I felt very strongly, and still do, that without a strong party structure, the Republicans were going to get nowhere in the state of California. We've gotten further and further away from it. We've gotten further and further splintered. I think that without a unified philosophy and a state central committee to unify our philosophy and to argue out all our points, we're going to become splintered and we're going to be a permanently Democrat state, which has been pretty well proven.

I still say today that until we get a party philosophy and candidates responsible to the party, we're not going to have any cohesion. If we get a member [of the Republican party] as governor, it'll be a fluke.

We have got to have the candidates responsible to the party. Now, in order to do that, you have to provide something for the candidates. Right now, the party provides practically nothing. Candidates go out and raise their own funds; they're very independent.

The congressmen, they call themselves Republicans--half of them, you couldn't tell [if they were] a Republican or Democrat as far as philosophy's concerned. They [congressmen], of course,

Parkinson: have a good defense. They say that many of the questions that they handle are not party-oriented, but I point out to them that they vote in Congress according to what the party chairman says they'll vote; they even sit separately in Congress from the Democrats and the Republicans, and not to give me a lot of baloney about that.

We're not going to get anywhere until we get back to a strong party again. I felt that building up the regular party was my main job in California. As we did it, we were able to win in the legislature and in the congressional seats.

Ideology

Sharp: How do you talk about ideology though? Ideology seems an invisible power that occasionally exists.

Parkinson: In my day, when I was in the party, the party stood for something. It stood for fiscal responsibility. We stood for individuality. We stood for a lessening strength of the federal government and an increased strength of the state government. We stood for a monetary system that was built on gold.

After Mr. Nixon came in, there was very little real ideology left to the party. This is why I separated from Mr. Nixon. I felt that recognition of China was a mistake. I felt that going off the gold standard was a deceitful mistake because up to the moment he did it, he was telling our allies that we were standing on the Bretton Woods agreement. Then all of a sudden, he [Mr. Nixon] simply cut the ground out from underneath them. It may have been for our short-term advantage, but in the long run it produced a cynicism on the part of our workers.

As far as I'm concerned, at this point, I find very little party ideology that can hold water anymore. Parties have disintegrated so much. We have so many wings. We have so many divisions. I can't go out and rally the workers like I used to be able to because the Republicans stood for something in those days.

After Mr. Nixon, I'm sorry to say, the ideology of the party is simply, in my way of thinking, whatever will work to get more people elected. I'm very cynical about the party at this point. I feel we've got to return to a conservative philosophy that stands for something regarding individualism, regarding party responsibility, and regarding a solid monetary and fiscal policy,

Parkinson: which Republicans tried this last election to get into. But they [Republicans] took the wrong tack and they ended up looking like they were more liberal philosophically, because of the Kemp Roth's tax scheme. They ended up looking wilder regarding fiscal responsibility than the Democrats and, of course, nationwide, we did not do as well as we should have.

Sharp: How do you talk about ideology then on the state level? Are fiscal responsibility and individualism important?

Parkinson: I felt that if the party was strengthened the nominees and the elected officials would be responsible to the party electorate for the things that they voted for and the things that they stood for.

Now, there are lots of issues in Sacramento that are not partisan--highways, for instance, and that sort of thing. Philosophically, there always have been, there always will be, differences between the Democrats and the Republicans, but unfortunately, I'm afraid, at this point, it's a little difficult to tell which is which by the votes.

We are easy targets for any opportunist that comes along that can speak out of both sides of his mouth, such as the present governor that we have. Consequently he is a true demagogue: he appeals simply to people who want to listen to whatever his little thing is at the moment and can get elected that way.

Of course, as history has taught us, a true republican balanced form of government gives way to democracy. Democracy, of course, gives way to what we have now, which is kind of a mobocracy. Anybody can appeal to any group on television that you can get. When you're elected, nobody knows what you're going to do. There's no consistency; you have no pattern; nobody knows what you stand for. We're at the whim of whatever comes along. I feel that this, of course, is very bad.

Minorities in the Party

Sharp: In 1966 and earlier, when you were state chairman, you tried to get various new groups to come within the Republican party. For instance, in an article in the San Diego Union of May 9, 1966, you said that the Republican party was in error in welcoming southern segregationists such as Strom Thurmond into California, because of the effect that it might have on blacks and blacks getting into the Republican party. Why did you do that and why is it necessary to do that?

Parkinson: We were being swept at that point, of course, by the ultra-conservatives, which are also not my philosophy, [whose ideas] border on racism. Of course, I felt that the strength of the party should be, as it was in [Abraham] Lincoln's time, that all men could come to our party and could stand for individualism, private enterprise, and doing themselves for themselves, so they could move up in our society. I could not find any place for segregationists in our party. I thought it would be a perfect time to try to pin it on the Democrats, who had been since time immemorial, since the Civil War, 1861, being one thing in the North and one thing in the South.

When the party allowed people to change over and stay as Republican, or become Republican, who were segregationists, I felt that was divisive of our philosophy. Again today, there is no philosophy, so that anybody can be anything they want to be.

Sharp: How did you try to bring blacks and Mexican-Americans into the party while you were state chairman?

Parkinson: I appointed as many as I could of the people on our executive committee of our state central committee. Unfortunately I found among the black community a lot of Uncle Toms in the Republican party. It was very difficult for me to reach down through and get to the activists, Negroes, blacks, who were interested in politics. It was very hard to find them. When you did find them, it was hard to convince them that it was for their own good, their own race's good, to go with individualistic philosophy rather than the handout.

I'll never forget, one of them [black Republicans] stood up one time when I asked him why he was a Republican and he said, "I'm a Republican because the Democrats have subverted my people on the philosophy that they can get something for nothing." He said, "I know that isn't life. The Republicans are the only ones who are stating very frankly: You get what you pay for. You do not get a free lunch anywhere; even though it may be free to you, somebody's paying for it. I want to see my people come along that way."

It was very easy to get the Mexicans because they were much more family-oriented, much more responsible. In politics today a lot of them [Mexicans] are listening to demagogues. But at that time we had some very fine Mexicans in the party and we still do; so do the Democrats. I don't think there was any problem about getting them [Mexicans].

Parkinson: We had lots of Chinese. We have a good delegation of Chinese here in San Diego. Tom Hom was our nominee for one of our assembly offices and was a very successful assemblyman for a number of years. We had no problems there.

I had a problem, of course, in finding blacks that weren't Uncle Toms.

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Parkinson: They would stand up in front and go through the "Amos and Andy" routine, passing resolutions for motherhood and this sort of thing. This was very bothersome for me.

A group of those people came to me and insisted that they have a greater percentage of Negroes on the state central committee. I told them my feeling about the state central committee, executive committee, was that I was color blind. It didn't make any difference whether a man was black or white, or whether it [the person] was a male or a female. What I was interested in was those people that were winning elections.

I wanted to see results and when we saw results, they went on the executive committee because the party was moving. If they wanted to produce new Republican memberships or whatever it was, they would be accepted, but until then they would not be.

They didn't like that. There were only about twelve or fifteen of them. They became quite insulted with me and I said, "I'm awfully sorry, but I'm working for an active party and we're looking for really good workers."

Sharp: Would you have any names of these people in those papers that you have at home, or do you remember any of the names of the blacks who did come into the state central committee?

Parkinson: I doubt whether we ever said anything about this to the press. It was simply that they [the blacks] were ignored because they were ineffective. I found a number of very fine young blacks and we worked with them. I even had one on my staff.

We worked with them, and Mr. Reagan later picked him [the black on Parkinson's staff] up. He was from San Diego. He was a young football player. He's dead now; he died as a young man. I can't think of his name. [He was] a very fine black and worked with us looking for activists, people who were interested in politics.

A Sidelight on the State Chairmen's Association

Sharp: It was said in the San Diego Union, February 2, 1966, that you had moved up steadily in the years '64 to '66 in national GOP circles. You stepped into "the void caused by the refusal of GOP national chairman, Ray Bliss, to discuss the issues." Apparently, you said that the Republican party could end the Vietnam war and you criticized Lyndon Johnson on other issues. Can you shed some light on this statement?

Parkinson: The whole issue of national politics, of course, became interesting when Mr. Reagan was elected governor. I had a fair share of help in that.

For those states that have elected a Republican governor or Senators, those state chairmen became members of the national committee. Now, this put me on the national committee, so I went back to Washington to all their meetings. Whether they won the elections or not, we all met together. Ray Bliss was the head of that.

When I went back for the first time, I was elected, much to my surprise, the western states chairman. The association was divided into four districts--western, southern, and so forth. So four of us advised Mr. Bliss on the national state chairmen's association.

After Mr. Goldwater was defeated and Ray Bliss, the technician, was moved up to be national chairman of the Republican party, then I took Bliss's spot--I was elected to chairman of the state chairmen's association. So I was the one out of the fifty Republican chairmen. I was very active in that for a number of years after I was finished with my tour of duty as California state chairman.

When I came out of the state chairmen's association, at that point, Mr. Nixon was running for president. He asked me to run his campaign. So I became the Nixon chairman, initially.

The Emergence of Ronald Reagan

Sharp: As a high-level member of the Republican party in California from '62 through the election of '66, you must have seen pretty closely the emergence of Ronald Reagan. How would you characterize this emergence?

Parkinson: Spencer-Roberts was looking around for a gubernatorial candidate and, very candidly, there was none forthcoming among the business community. I had hoped there would be, after all the stimulation of involving businessmen in politics we had done when I was chairman.

Mr. Reagan, after the defeat of Goldwater, of course, was prominent and a number of us went to him and succeeded in talking him into running. I stayed very definitely out of the campaign in the primary. I had a large part to do with holding Mr. [George] Christopher down, so that they both obeyed the "Eleventh Commandment" as far as they were each capable of doing it.

So when we did have the nomination, we were able to, for the first time, have a really combined Republican party, north and south, conservative and liberal. That [a unified party], of course, is an absolute essential before you can get anybody elected. When we had that, then Mr. Reagan was able to vault over the party structure and on his own, mainly because of television, appeal to the people of California and then he became elected.

Now, he [Reagan] did not use the regular party structure that first time he ran, and I have a number of comments relative to his allowing the Republican party to dissolve after he became governor. Mainly through his ignorance, the party at the end of his eight years was much worse than it was when I left it at the beginning of his eight years.

He [Reagan] did not understand the party structure. [He had] never been in it. He was simply a businessman pulled in from the outside, an actor. He was put up to run because the people behind him thought he could win. Secondly, he was conservative enough for them--and reasonably conservative, not a nut. He was a very rational, reasonable conservative.

Sharp: Who were the other people, either within the party or outside the party, who helped him initially?

Parkinson: Holmes Tuttle. Mainly they were a group of businessmen in Los Angeles. It was later that some of the businessmen in San Francisco, who by and large were all for Christopher, came in. The exception was Leland Kaiser, who was the only major financial man in San Francisco who was for both Goldwater and Reagan. After the nomination, he was able later on to get a finance committee together of most of all the politically conscious Republican businessmen. Most all of them were behind Reagan when he ran the first time.

Sharp: Would you put Henry Salvatori and Justin Dart in this category as well?

Parkinson: Yes. You mention two [Salvatori and Dart] that are from the opposite political spectrum in the Republican party. Henry was quite conservative and Justin Dart was not. Both of them after the primary came together and worked for Reagan, which is to their credit that they were able to get together on the nominee.

I think the reason they were able to was that the primary campaign was handled in such a way that they could come over and join. I'll never forget it--I used to have to talk to Nancy Reagan about it. She was quite upset by some of the remarks that Mr. Christopher made.

Mr. Reagan literally turned the other cheek many times, with the philosophy that we need the Christopher people to help us. Many of the Christopher people were active for Reagan after the primary even though Mr. Christopher wasn't.

Mr. Christopher came from the old-style Republican party here of the Kuchel-Warren faction, leftover of the conservatives, who were rather rigid. They accused the conservatives all the time of being rigid. I found out to my surprise that they were as rigid as any of them, as you can see by reading this letter from Lee Sherry [Smith] [rustling paper], who was one of them from the north.* Charming gal, a lot of fun, but rigidly liberal.

Sharp: How does the Republican State Central Committee decide who it's going to support for governor?

Parkinson: It can't and doesn't. The people decide, and after the nomination is made, then the party can come out for it. It had been the tradition, including when Mr. Nixon ran for governor, that the party officials come out for somebody in the primary. I was dead set against this. I thought it was a mistake to take a stand before the primary. I still do.

*Dr. Parkinson refers to a copy of a letter the interviewer showed him from Lee Sherry Smith to members of the Republican party, urging a strong stand to be taken against the John Birch Society at the 1966 Republican statewide convention.

Parkinson: I was the first state chairman that refused to do so. I felt that the state chairman was theoretically elected by all the Republicans in the state, inefficient as our system is. He should not take a stand before the primary.

This is another point of difference between Mr. Weinberger and myself. He came out strongly for Mr. Nixon in the primary. I did not. Nor did I come out for Mr. Shell. I said that whatever the people of the Republican party decide to nominate, then the party should take that person and go.

This was something new out here and I got a lot of flack from it, but as it turned out, it was the best system, and will always be the best system in my book.

Volunteer Organizations and the Campaign

Sharp: What was the relationship among the United Republicans of California, the California Republican Assembly, and the California Republican League, to the 1966 campaign?

Parkinson: Well, these were my crosses I had to bear, because there was a polarization of the activists. One was intensely conservative. The old Republican Assembly was intensely liberal with the Kuchel organization--always had been.

I saw a disaster occur in Fresno, when in a fifteen-hour session the ultra-conservatives took over that organization, and fifteen or twenty past presidents were on the state and were simply almost weeping, because it was being taken over by a group of conservatives--ultra-conservatives--of which Gardiner Johnson was the leader at that time. They literally took over that organization to have some basis for their conservative vote. They were being very successfully kept out of the party machinery.

I, as vice-chairman, more conservative than Mr. Weinberger, was very definitely put on the shelf while I was vice-chairman--not allowed to do anything. They could see this and on their own rallied in this organization. The United Republicans [of California] were born and were fairly conservative. I think the [California] Republican Assembly finally was taken over by the conservatives and, of course, the Young Republicans were strongly ultra-conservative. So the women's group tried to mediate both. There was a lot of fighting in their group. I tried to keep hands off both and keep both sides friendly.

Parkinson: I was able, finally, to pull them all together. It was a difficult thing to do--walking on eggs.

Sharp: And this is why you were state chairman?

Parkinson: Yes, I really believe so.

Sharp: The California Republican League was the more liberal--

Parkinson: Yes, they were the liberals--the Kuchel-Warren group.

Sharp: And UROC [United Republicans of California] was very conservative.

Parkinson: Very conservative. They were the far-right conservatives.

Sharp: The CRA [California Republican Assembly] was somewhere in the middle between these?

Parkinson: Yes, it varied, because they [CRA] had a lot of very loyal people who had been liberals, but had become Goldwater people and then Reagan people, so they were somewhere in the middle. Of course, there was a lot of factionalism, but you expect that and you want that within each organization.

It's when the organization becomes solidly one or the other that you worry about its effectiveness in the Republican party.

Sharp: How were the Young Republicans involved in the '66 election?

Parkinson: Oh, boy!

Sharp: May I give you a little background here? Apparently in February '66 you warned of a new leadership in the Young Republicans. Part of this new leadership was from the John Birch Society and you feared that the John Birch Society was trying to take over the Young Republicans.

In a news conference held at the Hotel Del Coronado, you said that three of the top officers of the Young Republicans were John Birch Society members and that the Young Republicans had withheld \$4,700 in funds due the national federation of Young Republicans. What was this all about?

Parkinson: The Young Republicans had been one of the first seized by the conservative movement in the nation. Like a lot of young people, as I was when I was a Young Republican, and a Nixon man, I was a fanatic. I bet I made more enemies for Nixon when I was a Young Republican than I made friends. You tend to be, when you're young, zealous and you overdo. The Young Republicans were no exception then in the conservative movement.

Parkinson: Many of their leaders I made my personal friends and was able to keep a lot out of the press and a lot of controversy under cover by convincing them [the Young Republican leaders] that they need us and we needed them. I even appointed a special man, a young minister here, [John] Sorenson, who was their liaison with the [Republican] State Central Committee. John Sorenson attended all their meetings and helped [to] kind of keep the lid on and moderated a little bit. I was, by and large, able to work with them.

One night I had to work with them up in Los Angeles all night when their officers came out from the national committee. They flew into the airport and at one of the big hotels there we worked with them all night. One group was in one room and down the hall were the national officers. I went back and forth with my state chairmen all night long until six o'clock in the morning. We agreed our differences and we had a press conference (much to the chagrin of all the Los Angeles press) at which we said the Young Republicans were paying their money which they owed the national group and were becoming a strong part of our state party. We worked with them and reason prevailed, after a lot of discussion.

Sharp: But they did have a fairly important role in the '66 election in precinct work?

Parkinson: Well, in the sense that they were always making adverse publicity. My problem was to try and keep them in harness and to get them to do something positive. You see, they had a lot of meetings and a lot of publicity, but they weren't the people who were out on the doorsteps. That was the Republican women and some of the clubs.

The Young Republicans were no more ineffective than when I was a Young Republican, but they did a lot of talking and at that time were not doing much helping.

Sharp: Did you also fear the takeover by the John Birch Society of local county committees of the Republican party?

Parkinson: No, I didn't have the fear of the John Birch Society that a lot of people did. I had been to some of their meetings. I didn't realize at the time, but I was invited to some of them.

I found them very reasonable people--they were frightened people. They saw the rise of communism, as I'm sure they do today. If anything, I think a lot of their philosophies have been proven true about the worldwide movement of the Communist party.

Parkinson: I didn't worry about them [John Birch Society members] in the regular Republican party as a block. They weren't too effective politically, frankly. They were very good at convincing each other, but they are not evangelists. They don't believe in trying to talk anybody into anything. If you believe it with them, then you become a member, but they don't go out and evangelize. You won't find them trying to convince members. I have physician friends right today who are John Birch Society members, but you'd never know it, because they never talk about it.

Sharp: So you wouldn't say that the Republican party in California is the John Birch Society?

Parkinson: It never has been. It never would be. Because of its history of Progressivism, of the Hiram Johnson age, I doubt that it ever will be. I doubt that it ever will be. We have a strong tradition of very humanistic, liberal background.

We and Minnesota were the two last outposts of the Progressive party. You see it today, crumbling right in front of our eyes.

The "Eleventh Commandment"

Sharp: Can you tell us now about your "Eleventh Commandment" and how you thought of it and why it was necessary to issue it? This was before the primary in 1966.

Parkinson: Yes. It was as we mentioned--to find some succinct, poignant, sellable form of my philosophy, which was that we all must pull together before the primary in order to win any general election in California, as long as we were so outnumbered. We weren't outvoted, because lots of Democrats have repeatedly come over to us or else we wouldn't have a party in California. When the votes are down, a lot of the Democrats vote for Republican candidates, obviously, or we would never have a winning election, because we're so outnumbered.

But I felt that the Republicans were right. Both sides, all sides were right to understand that we lost Nixon's election because of the Shell element of the party, who sat on their hands after they were offended by Nixon. Because of the conservatives losing Goldwater, because the liberals sat on their hands, I thought that now both elements have taken it on the chin.

Parkinson: It's time that we put out something that will be a rallying call for all elements to pull together. That was essentially what I said, "Thou shalt not speak ill of any Republican."* In other words, concentrate on the Democrats, even in the primary. Show how you are better able to beat the Democrats than anybody. Show what your qualifications are to beat the Democrats. In that way you will win our primary.

And this is what happened. We had a little trouble with some of them. Some of the old-timers, of course, wanted to practice it the old way--get in and cut everybody and then you could lose the general [election]. And this was not done unintentionally by somebody. Some members in our legislature were there [elected] as a result of a "sweetheart agreement." Regarding both parties in Monterey County, for instance, a member of the assembly saw to it that no one from his district ever ran successfully against the Democrats for senate. The Democrat in the senate did the same thing for the Republican assemblyman. It was a "sweetheart agreement" and consequently the two of them stayed in office perpetually.

Sharp: Who were these people?

Parkinson: Well, I'm not sure that I'm at liberty to say. Senator [Fred S.] Farr was the Democrat.

I think that the Republican is still alive and I don't think that it probably would be good to stir up any more controversy at this point with that. I had trouble with him, incidentally. He was not a "Cal Plan" member and didn't join the "Cal Plan," so consequently a lot of us were a little resentful because of this Unruh connection we felt he had.

Sharp: Was the issuance of the "Eleventh Commandment" related at all to some of the remarks that Drew Pearson made against George Christopher? I don't know if you remember any of those.

Parkinson: No, I don't remember those, but it [the "Eleventh Commandment"] was put in effect for the governor's race and, of course, had been preceded by my selling the whole party, I hoped, on the philosophy that the officers of the state central committee should not take a stand before the primary. That [philosophy] was something new. My predecessor had not done that.

*This is Dr. Parkinson's "Eleventh Commandment."

Parkinson: And secondly, with that preparation in mind, then the party should go at the primary, but not do anything that would divide the party in the general election.

I don't remember Drew Pearson doing anything to Christopher, except that he [Christopher] had a famous background about something in San Francisco that came up every election that he was ever in. I think the Republicans, by and large, ignored all of that.

Christopher was a fine man--was a tremendous mayor up there [San Francisco]. I never found anything in him to dislike. I think he would have made a very good governor. He probably did not reciprocate that feeling, because one time we were here in the El Cortez [Hotel], and he was asked about the "Eleventh Commandment." Why, he said he wasn't going to abide by it because he had enough trouble with the first ten, which I thought was rather clever. He didn't, but then, of course, that's perfectly his choice to do what he wanted to.

Sharp: According to an article in the Western Political Quarterly, an analysis of the '66 election, you performed, and this is a quote, "a minor miracle in acting as a mediator between the warring factions within the Republican party."* Now, you've told us about some of those factions, and about your role as mediator. How did you feel about that role? Was it something you considered your duty to be as chairman of the Republican party in California?

Parkinson: I think that's the major function of the state [party] officers, to strengthen the party and to help all the candidates nominated by the party. I feel very strongly about that. I think that our biggest mistakes heretofore had been for the officers to take a stand, as Mr. Weinberger did for Mr. Nixon. And much as I was in Mr. Nixon's camp, certainly long before Mr. Weinberger, still I felt very strongly that I should and could not take a stand for any candidate for the primary.

I'd lose my whole mediator role and I felt this [role] was a major function of the titular head of the party in California, to make sure that we did everything we did to strengthen the

*"The 1966 Election in California," Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, Western Political Quarterly 20: 535-554, 1967.

Parkinson: party, and not to do anything that would be divisive, because we are a minority party. I kept hammering home every time I spoke that we're a minority party and we must pull together.

The press accused me of trying to suppress the discussion of the issues, and I said, "You can discuss any issue you want and you can discuss any personality you want and as long as you're telling the truth about somebody." If a man was married three times and wasn't divorced, I mean that's your right to say that. We don't want to cover that [fact] over.

All I wanted to suppress was the innuendos and the slurs and the kinds of things that you see now in the party among candidates. It was not so much in the party as among candidates. Look at some of the elections this last time--some of the most bitter elections.

I don't think the public wants that [the bitter slurs]. I don't think the candidates should stoop to that. Frankly, I would rather lose than win by those means. I've always felt that way and I think the party would rather not have that going on.

It is basically the people who vote in the party, not the activists. You remember, only one percent of the Republican vote is an activist, one percent. The rest of them--all they do is they read and then they go to the polls. That's all. One percent of it [the party] only is the activist, but ninety-nine percent of them are fairly reasonable, cool, competent people. If they don't like the way a candidate is conducting his campaign, they'll vote against him. Even ideology doesn't make that much difference. You've got to appeal to the reasonable, sensible electorate. The party that doesn't, that gets too far off to the left, or too far off to the right, that's not news; they're not going to get elected. I saw this.

The Republican State Convention, August 1966

Sharp: In connection with the extremism issue that was a burden for the Republican party to deal with all along, what can you tell us about the state Republican convention held in the summer of 1966 and the platform that resulted from it?

Parkinson: Well, that [convention] was a very difficult one for me, because I wanted to be elected, but I also wanted a platform that I could honestly go to the people with and could support candidates for.

Parkinson: We succeeded in weeding out a number of the ultra-conservatives. You see, any party that's weak, that lacks organization, is a susceptible one for an extreme faction from anywhere. They [the faction] don't have to be rightist; they can be leftist; they can be whatever.

So I didn't want any faction to control the party. We had a lot of very prominent people who were a little extreme in their philosophy in one way or another. Every action, if it's too strong, stirs a reaction, so whenever you get too many far rights, and you irritate the far lefts, they become extreme. Pretty soon there's a shouting match going on.

When you get right down to the issues, most people can discuss them with a fairly reasonable approach. I found that people can do this in the Republican party, and we were able to make that platform fairly centrist, something Mr. Nixon could live with and something all the rest of us could live with and not become extremists. We had to do a lot of wrangling and so forth to try to prevail, but that is part of the political process, part of the fun of it.

Sharp: Did you see the letter that Mrs. Lee Sherry Smith wrote at that time as an important statement to try to get the party to be centrist?*

Parkinson: I regretted it [the letter] for all its moderate tone because I felt that the officers should be a moderating influence and she very definitely put herself on the side of the liberal element. This is understandable if you know Lee Sherry [Smith]. She represents that old Kuchel wing of the party. She was a very strong friend of Kuchel. She represents San Francisco, northern California.

We tried to moderate. We tried to keep the officers noncontroversial; she was deliberate in her attempt to become controversial and she did. I don't think it made any real difference. It may have stimulated some of the conservatives to work a little harder. I don't think it did anything other than that.

*See p. 21 above.

Parkinson: I think that's such a side issue. Our issues were to get candidates that the people of California could vote for. That's what our real issue was--to find young, capable, eager, willing, run-of-the-mill people who would become legislators, and that's what we were concentrating on. I was distracted by things like this [the extremism issue] that tended to put artificial barriers between us and cause controversy.

[chuckling] I deliberately got people elected along with me who were controversial, mainly so that I could watch them and hold them, keep them under my aegis. This was one example where I didn't succeed very well. But Lee's a doll. She was a sweet gal. This is politics according to the way she runs it. She did not represent the majority of the party as was shown that year.

Sharp: So in her saying that the John Birch Society element of the Republican party should be denounced, you saw that statement as a divisive one?

Parkinson: Very much so. I didn't feel like we could afford to denounce three people in the Republican party. If they were hard enough workers and were going to take over the party, then that's up to them. That's the way politics is. I felt very secure they weren't going to. They repelled a lot of their people by their ultra-right philosophy, so I had no great worry about that, but I felt we could do an awful lot of harm by denouncing instead of welcoming all elements to our party.

We'd do much better to vitiate their influence in the party by sounding moderate as leaders and attracting moderate people than we were by denouncing some [people] who, by and large, I think, were being denounced for reasons that nobody knew. Nobody knew what the Birchers really were. Nobody paid any attention to them to find out what they really thought.

They believe [in] a fairly old-fashioned brand of Americanism. I don't think they're too effective. I think that's their big problem.

The Rumford Act and the Campaign

Sharp: What about the repeal of the Rumford Act? It was also an issue for the platform--

Parkinson: I don't remember getting too much into that argument. There were certain compulsive parts about it that I think most Republicans did not like. But I think, generally speaking, most Republicans wanted some help for nondiscrimination of blacks in housing. There's always a big element in every party that wants it.

Look at some of your issues this last election. There was a very strong element that wanted to discriminate against homosexuals. There was a strong element that wanted to discriminate against smokers. There's always that element. We're not monolithic.

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Parkinson: The conservatives felt that the Rumford Act, because of the compulsive side of it, was a foot in the door for more government involvement in making people do things and forcing them to do things. Some of those things are always fought by certain groups of people, and later on it becomes the law of the land and we all get used to it. It was a little hard for some of them [the conservatives] to swallow then, just as the affirmative action program and the ERA are hard for some people to swallow.

When the majority of people go for it, eventually it becomes a law and I think you learn to live with it. I don't remember it [the Rumford Act] being such a controversial thing. I guess I apparently wasn't involved too much in that flank.

Sharp: Mr. Reagan made a big deal of it in his campaign. He was for repeal of the Rumford Act.

Parkinson: I think the compulsive elements of it were what disturbed him.

Sharp: There were very controversial articles in the San Francisco Chronicle saying that Mr. Reagan had really used the backlash from the Rumford Act's enactment.

Parkinson: Of course you'd say that of anybody that was against Rumford. [laughing] If you brought it up at all and you were against it, of course they would say that you're stimulating the racial backlash.

Sharp: We were just interested, because Mr. Reagan had used the repeal of the Rumford Act as a campaign issue, in what the relationship was between his use of that issue and the problems within the party during the summer convention. Did the struggle within that convention make him decide one way or the other to use it as an issue in his own campaign?

Parkinson: Well, I just simply don't remember it. I think it illustrates, however, a good point, and that is, with a candidate like Mr. Reagan, not beholdng to the Republican party whatsoever, he said and did just about what he wanted to, as did Mr. Nixon.

One of my major complaints about Mr. Nixon is that he ignored the Republican national platform and did just whatever he wanted to on his own--always did, from the first day he ever ran. Those people were not beholdng to any organized Republican party, nor was Mr. Reagan.

I can give you some classical examples of what little he [Reagan] knew about the Republican party. He [Reagan] vaulted over the Republican party, once he was nominated, to go to the people, mainly by television, and won with or without the party. No way of knowing how many voted for him on each party, but I will tell you that there were an awful lot of people who voted for him who were not organized Republicans. There must have been a lot of them. I don't think he paid an awful lot of attention to what we were all up there screaming about in Sacramento at the convention. Nobody does. That's the problem.

Reagan and His Political Ideology

Sharp: Did you support Mr. Reagan from the very beginning?

Parkinson: Only after the primary--

Sharp: Deep down, did you think that he was the right man to be governor?

Parkinson: Well, I've never told anybody that, and I very carefully wouldn't even tell my staff or my friends. If I found my staff was taking sides, and I watched very carefully for that, why, they would get fired. There were no bones about that. They knew that if one of my staff men went into one of his [the staff man's] areas and backed one group over another, of course, that was the end of him.

So I've never told anybody what I've felt before or after, and I don't think there's any reason why I should now.

Sharp: How did Mr. Reagan do battle with the extremist label that had been pinned on him by the Democrats and by some of the more liberal newspapers around the state?

Parkinson: Oh, I don't know how he got around that. I think possibly by his reasonableness and his humor on television. His candor, I think, was a big element with the press. He never came across as being as much of an extremist as Goldwater was. He was very careful to do that. Mainly, of course, it was by Spencer and Roberts, who had been running liberal candidates since they'd been doing the business. They themselves deep down were liberals. They felt they had a winner and so they moderated a lot of the things that he [Reagan] might have accepted without question.

Sharp: Do you think Reagan really was a centrist as far as the Republican party is concerned in California?

Parkinson: Today, he would be called a centrist. At that time he was a conservative. The Republican party still was, I think, a majority, at that point, of the activists. I don't know about the rest of them. They [Republicans] were fairly liberal as a result of 1912, Teddy [Theodore] Roosevelt and the Bull Moose [party], and the Progressive party. They [liberals] had been in complete control of this party [California Republicans] from that time up to as long as Hiram Johnson was alive. Then [Earl] Warren took up the baton. Then [Thomas] Kuchel took up the baton.

Kuchel, of course, was one of the ones that was the most intransigent. He [Kuchel] and I never did get along. He has made some rather astounding statements in the press. I've got a couple of headlines at home, saying: "Who the hell is Parkinson?" He [Kuchel] did not recognize a party structure as such. He was one of the old ones that felt every incumbent was God and he could do what he wanted to. That was one of the reasons why our party was so weak.

Sharp: How do you think Mr. Reagan's attitudes about the role of state grew? Did he have counsel from the Republican party as far as ideology was concerned? Or did he just sort of come full-blown with his ideas when he became a candidate for governor in '66?

Parkinson: Well, he had very little knowledge of the Republican party to start with. His philosophy was strictly his own that he had gained as having been a Democrat and then converting over to the Republican party. He's a very self-willed, self-oriented man and he learned and read.

He did not accept our philosophy. He came full-blown with a philosophy to prominence. It was the way he was by that time, having gone through all the communist battles there in Hollywood with the unions. He was more conservative and more concerned about Americanism than a lot of us were at the time, and he came

Parkinson: in, and his imprint became the party after he was governor. That's pretty well the way it's always been in this state, because he [Reagan] took some time to get it evolved, because the legislators, by and large, of the Republican party were all liberals.

You see, you had Bob [Robert T.] Monagan, who has always been a liberal. You had what's his name from Modesto, right down south of them, who went Nixon later on. I forgot the names of these guys. There were about ten to twelve guys who ran the party in Sacramento. Every one of them was a liberal.

Consequently, Reagan had quite some time getting along with them to start with, and I think his first four years showed that he couldn't even control his own party, let alone the Democrats. And he got very little done. Only later was he able to bring enough clout that he was able to get some of the things through he wanted to. And, of course, it was nowhere near what we felt he should have done, but that's the way it goes. He learned on the job, I'll tell you that much, like [Governor Edmund G., Jr., Jerry] Brown is having to learn on the job.

Financial Assistance for the Chairman

Sharp: What can you tell us about your receipt of \$30,000 from the Select Committee of Research and Education Fund to offset your expenses as state chairman?

Parkinson: Well, we organized what they call Parkinson Sponsors (is that the same thing?) when I was nominated for chairman. Then I realized that my activist role that I had envisioned was so much different from anything else that we were either going to have to put the chairman on a salary, or we were going to have to raise money on the outside to do the party functions, which is what we did. As I remember, it was called Parkinson Sponsors, and we went around and raised money from private sources for that money.

The funds were used by my staff to pay all the airplane tickets, and all the things that I had to do being taken away from my practice, because I simply didn't have any money. When I gave up my practice to go into that [being chairman], I really took a shellacking, so all those expenses were all paid. The funds were all accounted for and I took them off my income tax as I did the expenses, so I took the income and expenses off and it balanced out.

Parkinson: Those books were open to the press, one time or other, when the [San Diego] Union went over them all, or a couple of reporters came down. The L.A. Times, I guess, went over them. The books were just a series of expenses and where the money came from.

Sharp: You were very heavily criticized for taking money for what was essentially a volunteer position.

Parkinson: Yes, that's true, but I wasn't running for an elective office, so that I felt I was not a public official. I was a party official and working for the party. I would have liked to have seen the whole thing paid by the party, but they didn't have any money. That is the kind of money I was spending. So it [the money] was raised privately, and it was used for party purposes only.

The Fair Campaign Practices Committee

Sharp: In 1966, you appointed a Fair Campaign Practices Committee composed of Dr. Arnold Beckman, Herbert Hoover, Jr., Caspar Weinberger, J.D. Fluor, and Lee [Leland] Kaiser. Our sources say that the purpose of this committee was to mediate between the Republicans during the primary. Was this committee necessary because of the factions that you have said were existent in the party?

Parkinson: Well, if you look at those names, you'll see they're from one extreme to the left to the other [extreme] to the right, but all of them are prestigious names. All of them were big names. Some were ultra-conservatives, some were ultra-liberals, and then there were [those] like Herbert Hoover, Jr., somewhere in the middle.

I hoped that by naming this committee, it would impress the candidates in our party that they were being watched by prestigious people in our party. I think it worked. They [the committee] were a big enough group and an outspoken enough group that if some candidate said something in Fresno, he was called by one of them [the committee] who said, "Now what is this? What did you say? We saw what the press said. What did you say and what did you mean? Do you think that's wise, and are you going to go on doing that?"

I don't know how many times they were used, but that was their role, and I think it helped again moderate the primary, which is what the purpose was within our party.

Parkinson: You see, it wasn't a Democrat-Republican thing. I was spending all my time keeping the Republicans from killing each other off. [laughter]

The Outcome, 1966

Sharp: Let's talk generally now about the outcome of the 1966 election. I'd like to ask you, initially, why you think Ronald Reagan won.

Parkinson: [clearing throat] Well, I'd like to be able to say that I think he won because the party was strong, but I'll tell you this: I did not, in my planning for the party, when I was first vice-chairman, anticipate that we'd be ready for a governor by '66.

The "California Plan" had been envisioned to take four elections, each of the two years, and then when we had control of the assembly and later had control of the senate, then we had a base upon which we could elect a governor.

We weren't able to take the senate until we had the assembly, because there are two assemblymen in every senator's district, you see. In other words, I was saying that you had to build the party from the bottom up, and have a good basis.

Well, everything was going along fine and according to our scale; we were going up every four years, just what Mr. [Jesse] Unruh did on the opposite to us before. And we were up there till finally, when Mr. Reagan took over, we were in control of the assembly, not quite in control of the senate. In another four years, I thought we would be ready for governor. Of course, Mr. Reagan came along out of the blue and was nominated and was elected. Again, not much because of the organized Republican party, and as proved, we were not quite ready. Because of his lack of understanding of the basis of the Republican party he let it wither away, the party structure, and we began to lose special elections. We promptly lost the senate, and it wasn't long before during his regime we lost the assembly.

Now, of course, I went up to him [Reagan] and talked to him about the way Rockefeller handles New York. I did not like the way he was handling the party here, but he didn't listen to me. He was polite and nice, but he didn't pay attention.

Sharp: Do you remember much about the Spencer-Roberts cultivation of the citizen politician image for Mr. Reagan?

Parkinson: Well, this is one of the things that they felt that he must do. It was very popular not to be a politician at that point, and since he wasn't and [Governor Edmund G., Sr., "Pat"] Brown was, of course, this was an advantage for him to push, just like John Kennedy pushed the Catholicism, because it was a weakness and he [Kennedy] went out to meet it.

This is the way Reagan used this theme against ["Pat"] Brown, by saying he was a citizen. The climate of the times, as I would say today, was that people distrust politicians and career politicians. Therefore, I think it brought him some votes.

Sharp: How much of Mr. Reagan's victory was due to the packaging supplied by Spencer-Roberts?

Parkinson: A lot. A lot. A very attractive candidate, a very deeply thoughtful one, a quick study; he learns instantaneously. I've sat alongside of him at press conferences and he would talk to me on the side. I'd give him an idea and he would expand on it. He's a very quick study.

So, consequently, as soon as he became governor, he began to learn awfully fast. But the packaging was a big part of the man. There's no question about the image that he portrayed and he did masterfully. He did beautifully.

I used to watch those speeches statewide in color television. I used to marvel because I had seen him come along. I used to marvel at how he was being handled; well-done. Now, of course, he's a consummate politician on his own.

Sharp: How much did the big donors to the Ronald Reagan campaign, like Henry Salvatori and Holmes Tuttle, control the actual campaign and the Republican State Central Committee?

Parkinson: Well, they didn't control the state central committee at all. They were in charge of the campaign, of course; that is, they were the ones who said, "Hire Spencer-Roberts," or "Don't hire Spencer-Roberts," or whatever.

They controlled the campaign as the money always controls the campaign. Money buys the professional skill, and then they [the professional skill] find the candidate, and they manufacture the candidate, and they put him over.

Without a real true candidate, the press picks it up in a hurry, so it has to be a legitimate candidate, but Holmes Tuttle and Henry and that whole crowd were excellent men. They were

Parkinson: well motivated. They threw a lot of their own money into it for no advantage at all, simply because they were tired of seeing the kind of candidates they had for governor up to then.

Sharp: Because of ideological reasons?

Parkinson: I don't think so, particularly. Because, you see, you had all kinds of ideological, financial groups in Los Angeles backing Reagan. All kinds. Justin Dart. Leonard Firestone was a Kuchel man and was definitely not a Reagan man. But as soon as he met Reagan and talked with him, he realized there was a leader, and so Leonard was very active in this campaign. He [Firestone] was as smart a man as Salvatori was funny. I don't think [it was] for ideological reasons; they simply wanted to get ["Pat"] Brown out of there.

Sharp: Was there a definite shift of political power to southern California then, with Ronald Reagan's victory?

Parkinson: No, I wouldn't say that. In my book, political power in the state of California is [in] the legislature. And I think that it has taken some years for southern California to establish it. There was a lag between the population and the power, and you can see it in such things as the water plans and highway development. The north was getting a disproportionate amount of funds in the senate in the north for years.

San Diego, for instance, couldn't get a highway east from here worth a darn because we weren't powerful enough. I think, in time--and I don't think it had anything to do [with] Ronald Reagan. For instance, ["Pat"] Brown was able to get the first water plan through that was statewide. Now, he was a southerner [from southern California], that's true, and he had the votes in the assembly. I think it's the legislature that, belatedly, but slowly, encompasses the power because of the population. When they went to the one man, one vote on the Democrats, where your senate was reapportioned according to population, then in all practical purposes we were a unicameral legislature.

In my book the [federal] constitution said that every state is guaranteed by the federal government a republican form of government--small "r." Now, at the time that the constitution was adopted a republican form of government was adopted to be a bicameral legislature. One reason was because there were thirteen states, three big ones and ten small ones. That compromise came in 1776 where the whole summer they fought over this question: how to get three big states together with ten small ones and not

Parkinson: disproportionate influence. They worked out a legislature that was bicameral, one by population and one by area. That's the way the United States Senate versus the Congress is today.

Yet the United States Supreme Court says, "You shall reapportion your senate by population and your assembly by population." Well, I think that's unconstitutional. I think it's wrong.

When we did it, of course, southern California got really powerful and, I think, disproportionately so. I think the small farmer in Siskiyou [County] is being taken to the cleaners because he's not getting his share of road funds in my book. I think that road funds should not only go by population, as they do now, but also by area, what you've got to cover, how many farmers you've got to get into town, and that sort of thing. That's all gone--one man, one vote. Now we have everything by population.

Backing Up: Reapportionment, 1965

Sharp: Did you have a role in 1965 in the reapportionment struggle within the Republican State Central Committee?

Parkinson: I sure did. We had our program and we fought hard and long. This is really the guts of politics, reapportionment every ten years. This was the main reason that my program was set for four--every two years that we had to get, because we had to maintain at least one control of one house of [the] legislature during reapportionment. We had to have it [reapportionment] or the Democrats would do just what they've been doing to us since they took over under [Jesse] Unruh years ago, and the party that is in power controls the reapportionment.

We hope it will be reasonable. It has not always been so, especially in the state. We've had a lot of gerrymandering. In fact, it was really a debacle this last time.

Sharp: So what did you try to do as state chairman?

Parkinson: We tried to organize it so that we'd readjust the disproportionate, way out of proportion districts--Democrat over Republican. We tried to make the districts more even.

The reason we wanted them more even is that, even Stephen, given an even race, the Republicans will always win in a moderate Democrat district and Democrats won't because the

Parkinson: Republicans turn out better. They have a better party organization for getting out the vote. So we didn't want even, but we wanted at least somewhere more even than it was. The way it has always been done, incidentally, by the delegation in Congress, we found out about to our dismay. We found out incumbent Republicans in the congressional delegation were very willing to organize with the incumbent Democrats, so that things kept the status quo.

When you're a minority, that is understandable, but when you're not a minority then that is objectionable, and we had a lot of problems with our own people who we felt sold us down the river by working out arrangements beforehand to keep their districts the way they were--the "sweetheart" arrangement if there ever was one. This conflict happens every ten years--the incumbents against the nonincumbents. It's quite an interesting story.

Financing Republican Candidates

Sharp: I now have some general questions about the '62 to '66 period. The first one involves the financing of the Republican party in California. Now, from our sources it sure looked like Mr. Reagan didn't have any worries as far as campaign financing is concerned--

Parkinson: That's right, but that's not the Republican party; that's the governor.

Sharp: These big names that you and I have talked about--Leonard Firestone, Henry Salvatori, Holmes Tuttle, and some others-- seem to be at least partially responsible for his lack of money worries. [Parkinson nods his head in agreement] But what about the rest of the Republican party? Who was taking care of the bills for the rest of the Republican party for '66?

Parkinson: Reagan never claimed he was the Republican party. He ran independently of the Republican party really. The job of the state central committee is to make sure that we get legislators and assemblymen into state offices.

Now, Reagan did understand because of his guidance from Spencer-Roberts how crucial it was that he not be put in there alone. That we taught him very early. He must help out. So

Parkinson: he did more than his share after the primary of going around and helping out different assemblymen so that he could get them in. He was crucial in a number of districts for us.

He was also, of course, very helpful in getting a Republican team in from the attorney general to Mrs. [Ivy] Baker Priest, the treasurer, and all down the line. So he did very well on that aspect. That's mainly what he had to do.

He [Reagan] had not yet grasped the idea that he had to support the Republican party and it wasn't until way late in his second term that he began to understand the importance of an organized party.

He had Reagan chairmen in every county and we had elected county central committee chairmen. I'm not even sure he was aware there were such things.

In fact, when he wanted to give a party for me at the governor's Mansion, for my wife and I, the first party that was given up there, in January [1967], when I was to go out [of the chairmanship], he asked what I would think of having a party with all the county chairmen there and their wives. I said, "This, to me, would be the best thing because the county chairmen have felt left out."

Well, he didn't understand me. What he meant was the Reagan county chairmen, and I was talking about the central committee county chairmen. So we changed at the last minute and had both of them there.

This was a misunderstanding which was pretty basic about the Republican party. Only later did he begin to see where it would help him, and therefore it was important to get the Republicans across.

It's the old fight. He owed nothing to the Republican party, therefore, consequently, he didn't know much about the Republican party. It wasn't until he found out that he had to have a Republican party backing him in the legislature that it ever made any sense.

Sharp: Then, to back up and talk about financing in a little more detailed way, do you have lists of names of people who were regular financial contributors to the Republican party?

Parkinson: [There were] hundreds of them in every county. Now, of course, you remember, none of it [the money raised] went to the state central committee per se. It was equally divided between local candidates and their [the counties'] quota they owed the state central committee. We had big meetings of the state central committee in which we gave out plaques for every county that met their quota, and all this kind of stuff. Then the money was put through the "Cal Plan" and the "Cal Plan" picked certain target districts and we sent in no money to candidates, but we sent in professionals to go in there and run the campaigns. Now, if the candidate didn't want our help, then we pulled out. If he wasn't winnable, we pulled out.

We went over all the nonincumbents and picked a number of districts each time, which we targeted. Nobody knew what those districts were outside this small committee. We worked hard in those districts and we won them consistently till we had a name for ourselves. Then the legislators began to come around and say, "Come on, give a hand. Let me borrow your man for such and such--."

So we began loaning our staff to different legislators who were having a hard time. I wanted to do this because I wanted them to feel beholden to the regular party. When I was chairman we worked very well with the legislators. We were working hand in glove with them going up there. The candidates were running without the governor. It made no difference who was the governor. They were running in their own districts.

But the funding can only be done through the county central committees and their respective finance committees. They are beholden by law to the county central committee.

Now, to get a county central committee he was fighting the united Republican finance as they were in San Diego for years here; then you had to get them together. I had to go around and pull them together and get them working together. It was part of my job.

As I say, I organized the first statewide, you might call it, united Republican finance; mainly money used over and above our budget to run the state committee, but it was used for the "Cal Plan." That was what was producing results. When they [businessmen] saw the results, and I could show them on posters what we did and where we did it, then the businessmen began to see that we were running the party like a profession and then they began to have confidence, and the money began to come in.

Sharp: One of the problems with talking about campaign financing in California is that the campaign declaration laws are very weak--

Parkinson: They were at the time. They're pretty strong now. They were weak, which was fine because from the party point of view we could move funds from one county to another without any problems. We could pick our districts. We could take the money from the Bay Area where we weren't going to win a single candidate and put it down in Fresno and we'd win.

They had been doing that in San Francisco, so I convinced them that this was just a further extension statewide of what they were already doing so they should join us, and they did. So we had no problems there.

Of course, the funding laws, I think, came about mainly as a means of showing the public where the money was coming from and in that sense it was good. I don't think there was any worry about that at all. But, for instance, the county of San Diego would raise their money at their hundred-dollar-a-plate dinner. That was the money that they paid the state central committee, a quota which they were assigned according to the number of Republicans in their district. A weak county didn't have to raise so much money, but we took money from the big, strong, wealthy Republican county and put it in a weak county.

That's what Unruh was doing, only he was doing it outside the party. He was doing it from lobbying funds and we chose deliberately to do it within the party. That decision had to be made, whether you were going to do it within the party or do it without the party. Of course, we had no lobbying funds because we were weak. So we did it within the party, legally--no problem there.

Those funds today would all be accountable, as all the candidates put in the list of people that gave them money and I guess the central committee puts in a list of people that go to their dinner. I don't quite know how they handle that, because that's all happened since I was in, but I'm sure they do; you know, if the county central committee gives a dinner and they put in all the ticket orders that pay \$100 apiece. It's all listed for sure.

It's a good idea, because I fought all the way along the kind of thing Unruh was doing because he was getting a lot of Republican money. He was getting Republican money because he was winning and a lot of businessmen go with the winners. The hell with the philosophy. So Unruh was taking a lot of money that

Parkinson: was being handed to him. The medical association, all kinds of real estate associations--they were giving him money and he would take that out and put it where he wanted to win. We did the same thing, only we did it within the party.

Sharp: The way you talk about organizing funds for the campaign, it's almost like military strategy--

Parkinson: It is. It's exactly that. If I had to plan a campaign to take over some area, I would do it exactly the same way we did it. We had our intelligence section working among the Democrats. We were known to sponsor not officially, but we have run candidates--##

Parkinson: It's exactly like a military campaign--using every bit of brains you can find.

Sharp: Why do people contribute to the Republican party, and to its campaigns?

Parkinson: Remember, mostly people contribute to candidates. They're not interested in just contributing to the party. But you make an appeal, such as Jerry [President Gerald R.] Ford does for the national committee. Because of Jerry Ford they will contribute to the national committee. He convinces them in a letter that we need the strength of the Republican party. A combined turnout of the vote.

No candidate can do it alone; the party has to do it. A combined network approach of all the candidates putting money in. A combination of things, we've learned, is where the strength comes from. Every candidate doing for himself, we get nowhere. By combining and working through the party--and, of course, that's my philosophy--we are able to do a lot better and a lot more.

So people will give for a party if the candidates will push it; that's the most prominent reason. Philosophy, yes, if you've got a philosophy.

I used to have no problem raising money for the Republican State Central Committee. I could show them what we were doing, show them how we were electing Republicans. I was not involved in what they were doing after they were elected; that's their business, whether they're responsible to the party or they aren't. They go out and do what they want. We don't ever tell them, the state central committee, how to vote or anything like that. I thought that was not right, but getting them there was our job.

Sharp: Did you feel, when you were state chairman, that industry in California would help the Republican party, or would have something to gain by helping you?

Parkinson: No. No, you see, we had a Democrat president, and we had a Democrat governor, and a lot of money was coming into the state from contracts from the national government. Mr. [President John F.] Kennedy made no bones about saying right down here in San Diego that he wasn't after the jobs of the people down there at Convair. He was after the job of president. As it turned out, he pretty well squelched the airplane business out here in the West and took it to Massachusetts. He was very clever that way. So a lot of big people who had contracts with the federal government had to be very careful about helping either party in any way.

Most of the big firms, as opposed to individuals with their own money, were bipartisan. I was very active with the Democrat state chairman, going around and stimulating those groups where everybody assigned so much of their paycheck into a fund and it was divided up the way they voted. We felt that that had more hope for the future than any that I know of.

We worked with some of the economists in Trenton. I remember this one fellow who's done most of the work on recording the financing of the campaigns. I went back and met with him. A very brilliant guy. Knew an awful lot about party finance and the way elections were won and how much money was spent and so forth. I've forgotten his name, but he was a very brilliant fellow.

The companies were under very strict laws about giving money to either party or any candidate, but they could get it from all their employees and give it equally to all the candidates in all the parties. They could do that. We went to the telephone company, the Democrat chairman and I, and we debated in front of the gas and electric [company]. We went all over the state doing that, trying to get the common, ordinary guy interested in helping out the party.

Sharp: Then when you went to talk to these industries, you were more interested in talking to the worker in the industry rather than the industry itself?

Parkinson: Very definitely. Ever since Goldwater had reversed our trend of getting small donors into the party rather than big donors--he got more small donors than we've ever had before--that's what we were after; that's where your money is.

Sharp: Did that effort fit in with your idea of a solid Republican party?

Parkinson: Definitely. I felt when a man puts in \$2 in the Republican party, he's not going to vote Democrat. He's going to vote Republican. So I was for spreading the base of the party. It's been very good. We've done better than the Democrats ever since Kennedy on getting more small money from Republicans if you actually look at the facts. The Democrats are getting all the big lump sums.

Brown gives the dinner at the Century Plaza. He's getting it at \$500 hunks. Well, we don't have anybody do that.

Sharp: As state chairman, and especially before a big election like the '66 election, did you meet with the head officials of PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric Company] or some of these large industries?

Parkinson: No, we never met with anybody officially like that. We would meet with guys who were on Republican state finance, such as Henry Salvatori, but they were very careful not to place their companies in either side. They didn't know who was going to win either.

They are apolitical. The tops of those big things [companies] are very apolitical. They've got about as much Republican philosophy as Democrat philosophy. It just depends on who is winning. That's not the people we're after. They're really not the opinion makers in California.

Press, yes, I would meet with the editors of every magazine and newspaper I could find, but not with business.

Contrasting Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon

Sharp: One last question about what I think was really the tail end of the campaign in '66: do you know anything about a rumor that Henry Salvatori almost dumped Ronald Reagan and chose Goodie Knight instead to run?

Parkinson: No, I don't know anything about that and, of course, it would be ridiculous. Once Ronald Reagan got under way, there was no stopping Ronald Reagan. I don't care who backed him. Ronald Reagan was his own candidate. He's always been his own man and that's one of the nice things about him and they know it.

Parkinson: He [Reagan] will listen to Henry [Salvatori], just as Mr. Nixon would, but he's his own man. You get men up at that level and there are no patsies. Nobody gets to that level and gets the respect of those tough types if he's going to be a patsy for them. They would never get there. They'd never select him in the first place.

I remember the number of people who used to come to me and say, "Well, get Mr. Nixon to do this." I couldn't get Mr. Nixon to do anything. Mr. Nixon did what he wanted. He listened to all of us, but he made up his own mind. And I had a lot of trouble convincing people that way.

It's the same with Ronald [Reagan]. He's his own man and he should be. You have to have confidence in yourself at that level. Nobody's going to help you. Boy, when things get tough you've got to do it yourself.

By the time they've [candidates like Reagan and Nixon] gotten to that level, that's the kind of men they are or they don't get there. A weak man cannot get that far, so nobody could influence Ronald Reagan to do anything in my book. Nor Governor Brown. I think he's his own man; nobody's going to tell him how to do or pull out from behind or anything else.

Men that reach that level of responsibility will listen to everybody, but they make up their own minds. They are going to do what they want, and Henry [Salvatori] no more could have dumped anybody than fly. Of course, Henry [Salvatori] is an interesting guy, very opinionated, bullheaded, idealistic. God, I often wonder how he could be so idealistic. But a helper, not a doer himself. He'll help people, but he can't get out in front and do anything. A nice guy. I like him very much, but he couldn't have any influence on Ronald Reagan, unless Ronald Reagan wanted to go that way, whatever it was.

VII STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Sharp: What question did you want to bring up before?

Parkinson: Well, the question that I was going to bring up again--and I think somebody (I have forgotten who it was) wrote the book about the poor Republican parties. I think that after you've worked in the party a while a lot of the things are inexplicable. You can't understand why one side is fighting another and all this kind of thing. There's such confusion unless you realize there really are at least four Republican parties the way it's legally constituted. It [the four parties] is one of our biggest weaknesses in my book.

For instance, the state of California is different from any other state the way they handle their state politics. We have in this state laws by which a person runs for the county central committee. There is also a series of laws of the county central committee--what they can do and what they can't do. Then the state central committee, the next step up the line, is made up not of the county central committee people at all, until I came along, but made up of the nominees and the incumbents appointing four to five representatives. The representatives make up a committee which is bigger than all the county central committees together.

Until I came along, the county central committees had no influence on the state central committee whatsoever. I appointed the county chairmen's association as part of my cabinet, so I always had the county chairmen with me at every one of our officers' meetings. In addition, I put a great percentage, all the activist county chairmen, on the executive committee.

Now, I also had a lot of volunteer organizations on my executive committee because that's a whole other kind of the party. They run all by themselves. They may or may not be in

Parkinson: conjunction with the county central committee. You may have your Republican finance. It and they'd go off and do their own thing, although legally they're under the county central committee. So county central committees are, generally speaking, in this state very ineffective. And they want to be effective, but they're very ineffective.

Then you have your state central committee that owes, legally, nothing to the county central committee. Then you have your national committee, made up of two members from every state, appointed by the delegation that won the presidential election last year. You see, they combine and they're elected in this state here and the Reagan delegation then went to the convention. There were two delegations that went to the convention. The Reagan delegation succeeded in getting Mr. Reagan nominated, so the Reagan delegation picks the national committee. So the national committee is made up of one hundred people, two from each state, appointed by the delegation, which may have nothing to do with the Republican party. Now, it happened very acutely in the Reagan operation. On all the Reagan delegation, there wasn't a party person on there. And when they went to nominate Goldwater, there wasn't a party activist on the delegation. They appointed Ann Boler and Gardiner Johnson--neither of them were party people--to the national committee.

So here you have the national committee having no relation to the state committee; the state committee having no relation to the county committee. Now, that's bad enough. We bridged it a little bit. We got the national committee to agree that anybody that won for governor or a senator, that state chairman could be on the national committee. So we bridged that a little bit and I bridged the other by having the county chairmen on the state committee, which made them a very active part.

Now, you think that's bad enough--that's the legal party. Now, you have every candidate running on his own. He can run on his own as long as he can get in the primary; then he turns to the party and says: Okay, help me.

Well, he looks around and there's no party. He's alienated half of them to begin with and then there isn't any party--no Republican finance--no nothing.

Then you also have your congressional candidates, who are coming from a district that is different from all the other districts, and they run, literally, their own party. The congressional delegation owes nothing to the national committee. They owe nothing to the state committee. They owe nothing to the county committee.

Parkinson: Bob Wilson runs his own district and he gets elected on his own. He owes nothing to anybody. If he'd happened to have been on the Goldwater delegation and Goldwater was nominated and Goldwater was president, then he [Wilson] was something, but otherwise he's not.

Of course, in the state legislature they are elected too and ninety percent of them have nothing to do with the party, so they go out and do what they want.

Now, when you get to Congress, you now have in Washington a national Republican committee, a congressional committee which Bob Wilson headed, which each congressman throws money into. They hire a guy, and they run around and they hire a staff, and they get themselves elected, and others that they think can win.

You have the senatorial committee raising funds, having nothing to do with the national committee, nothing to do with the congressional committee, nothing to do with any of the parties, and they're all out raising their funds. Then every four years you have a presidential party, and all the people for Nixon rally around him and they may have nothing to do with the party.

Sharp: An incredible network!

Parkinson: It's the most screwed-up system I ever saw in my whole life. I never saw a worse system. You couldn't perfect a worse system. There's no correlation. A man can work hard for the Republican party here and he finds out they're doing something else entirely different somewhere else.

I went out of my way to entertain the congressional delegation. I realized early they had nothing to do with the state party. I went back and was entertained by a number of southern Californians at a big party. I talked and I consulted with them about everything I did. I flew back there so many times. I was tired of going back and forth to talk with them and ask their advice on things. They couldn't believe it.

I even rented a plane one time--flew them all out at one of our meetings. Nobody had ever done that before; people had never clapped as the delegation was introduced and marched down the aisle. [gestures as if clapping] We made a big thing out of it to get them into the party, get them working with us, you see. We did everything I could think of to tie all of the party together.

Parkinson: It was fine while I was there, and as soon as I left it began to fall apart. The guy that followed me just didn't have the same zeal. I think he wanted to, but he didn't have the same background. He was from northern California and he was distressed about southern Californians. He didn't work hard. Anyway, they started losing special elections. Once you start to lose, everything falls apart. So it was very disappointing to see a steady loss.

I blame Ronald Reagan for part of it because all during his era we were losing. The Republican party went down, down, down.

VIII ROLE ON NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF NIXON FOR PRESIDENT, 1968

Sharp: I think the last questions I have is about your role on the national committee of Nixon for president.

Parkinson: I had proposed to Mr. [George] Romney, with some of my staff who were still with me after I was through with the [Republican] State [Central] Committee, that we handle this campaign [for Romney] for the thirteen western states. I was on my way back to see him in Lansing, Michigan, when I was stopped at the airport by Herb Klein. Herb wanted to know if I would come to work for Mr. Nixon. Well, I said I'd like to talk about it, so he said, "All right, when you get to New Orleans at the national committee meeting, I would like you to fly up and see Mr. Nixon." I said, "Okay."

So on the way to the national committee, I went to see Mr. Romney in Michigan. I'd known him for some time, admired him very greatly, still do. We presented our thing which we worked out for running the thirteen western states for his presidential campaign. We knew the western states and knew all the chairmen and the situation in every state. I knew it better than any of his people did. He said for me to go down and see Mr. Fisher, his finance chairman, a Jewish fellow. So we went in Mr. Romney's chauffeur-driven car from Lansing to Detroit and we talked to Mr. Fisher.

We said this was rather urgent, because there was a time element, and we were pushed.

He said, "Well, I've got to think about it." They put us off, put us off.

So then I went down to New Orleans and the national committee. During the meeting I walked out on my wife, left her there, and got on a plane and went north [to New York], thinking nobody

Parkinson: would see me. A New York reporter was on the plane and spotted me. I met with Mr. Nixon up there and I told him I thought it was a good idea. We'd have to talk finances and so forth. He said, "Why don't you go back and make up a budget and then come on back here and we'll talk finances."

Meanwhile, I was pushing Mr. Romney all I could. Mr. Fisher finally flew out to Hollywood, and we went out and talked to him. He still wouldn't make up his mind, so we told him, sorry, we had to know.

I went to Washington to see Mr. Nixon and we agreed that I would work for him, and then how to get out from Mr. Romney. Of course, I had been working with Mr. Reagan and he was going to be a presidential candidate. I had friends right at the top of all three of the candidates. It was a trying time.

I finally went to work for Mr. Nixon and brought some of my staff who weren't working for Mr. Reagan. We set up a campaign headquarters in Washington and we had all his old people back there for meetings, to raise funds and so forth. The only one I ever had any trouble with was the attorney general, John Mitchell. He's now in prison. He was a lawyer in Nixon's law firm. I had lots of trouble with him because he never did believe that anybody from the West knew anything. So I had to fight him all the way up. He later took over my job when I left.

I left Mr. Nixon just before the primary that year when I had my wife back in New Hampshire and she developed a cancer. I had to resign and come out here and stay with her till she died about a year later. I got out of the campaign at that point.

Bob Haldeman was a friend of mine and I hired John Erlichman. I knew all those people, but I got out of there at the time when I did because of my wife.

Sharp: Well, that's all the questions that I have--

Parkinson: I can't think of anything we haven't covered. I'm a little vague on details, unfortunately, because of that time, but so much happened.

IX THE PLIGHT OF THE VOLUNTARY PARTY OFFICIAL, AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Sharp: I have one more question. What can you tell me about the plight of the voluntary party official like yourself?

Parkinson: I consider [it] one of our weaknesses that we, by law, are required to have a chairman alternate from north and south. That alone is ridiculous. This is one whole state. It doesn't make any difference what size it is. We go from one end of the state to the other in one day; we call all the time. So it's ridiculous to have a chairman from the north and one from the south alternating.

Secondly, it's ridiculous to have a volunteer only go two years. He's out just after he begins to build up a structure and could do something.

Now, Ray Bliss was always my ideal in Ohio. Ray Bliss made a business out of it. I could have made a business out of it if I were paid a salary. We could have produced something of lasting worth for the Republican party here. I think the Democrats could do the same thing if they wanted to. Ray Bliss, in my way of thinking, was one of the best technicians that I have ever known.

Our theories on the use of the computer in politics are fantastic. What we learned from Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy, I can't tell you. It's fantastic. There's a little book called The Candidates' Campaign and the Computer, by Itheal DeSaulla Poole from MIT, that every man in politics should read. He showed how Bobby Kennedy used the computer in the first Kennedy election. It was fantastic what you can do with the means of a computer because a vote from a district doesn't vary very much. Every four years you get about the same vote and on the same principles. They were able to simulate the way an election should go in Buffalo, New York, and that's the way it went. He was within one to two percent.

Parkinson: Ray Bliss is that kind of a politician. That's the way I would have liked to have been--to really build a career in management and to make sure that everybody gets their input into a party.

We're not as democratic, used with a small "d," as I would like to see. We're pretty well based financially from everywhere, which is good, but we really don't have the participation that I like. The Democrats realize that they don't either and they're trying to remedy their party at this point by taking half of the delegates away from the nominees and incumbents and putting them in party caucuses. Now that, of course, is a run around the county central committees, but I guess the recent mood, as of this morning, is to use one quarter county central committee members, one quarter caucus members, and a half delegates and nominees. That, I think, is a step ahead of us.

I think we need something like that constantly to bring new air into the party, a refreshed new thing, to get a participatory type of political system. How we're ever going to do it on a volunteer basis, I'll never know, because I worked hard at it for four years.

Actually, I had longer than four years because we got the law changed while I was chairman to go from instead of August, from January to January. It [this new system] gave me an extra six months.* Well, of course, I didn't think that would apply to me. I told the legislature, "You cannot pass a law that involves people then in office." They said, "Oh, we can and we did."

So I had to take it, despite my wife's unhappiness, for another six months, but it was fun because it took me through a presidential election and a gubernatorial election. The way it is now, you go through one or the other as a state chairman, but you don't go through both. I had the fun of going through both--fun, anyway--the responsibility of going through both.

I think we've got to somehow do a little more of what [Nelson] Rockefeller does in New York to put it on the basis of a professionalism that we don't have here. We have it only transiently, and then only clustered around the candidates, not around a party.

*So instead of ending his chairmanship in August, 1966, Dr. Parkinson remained until January, 1967.

Parkinson: It's a sham. The national presidential conventions are a sham because they're so watered down that they mean nothing to anybody and then none of the candidates pay any attention to them. That's all got to change if we're going to get a really responsible type of government.

People want the shortcut. They want the man on the white horse. They want a Carter to swing in from nowhere or a Kennedy to fly in from nowhere and mesmerize them. Well, unfortunately, that's not very effective and you never know what you're buying. You're buying a pig in a poke as the present president shows. Nobody, even the Democrats, knew what he was. He wasn't a very outstanding governor. A four-year term as governor of Georgia and eight years as a peanut farmer does not a president make. I sympathize with him, the problems he's in, but that isn't the way we should elect presidents. The party, like the old days, should select a candidate. That candidate is beholden to the party and the party beholden to the people. If they aren't, then they don't get elected.

Now, I used to get so mad at people because they can't tell the difference between Republicans and Democrats. Well, right today, there isn't a hell of a lot of difference. It's sad because until we get party responsibility, we're not going to get the kind of men running for office that we need. A man can't do it alone anymore. He has to be a millionaire. Of course, that's another trend, as you saw in the last election--a millionaire candidate. That's away from the way I think we should go. That's not the way I think we should go.

Well, political philosophies are interesting, fascinating. One other thing I might add--it's fascinating to me--we could never do in Connecticut or New York or North Carolina what we can do in California, precisely because we are so unstructured, you see. This gives a tremendous opportunity to young people and to anybody who wants to get in and make something in the party in California. You never could do it in Wisconsin. Everything is structured, what your dad did and what you did. California is wide open. We don't have the same precincts one election to another. They're all numbered differently. You can't set up a record. It's the most confusing thing because we have such a transient, migratory population. You've got to prove yourself at every election, which is a wonderful opportunity for newcomers. It's precisely the reason I was able to get so far with so little.

Transcriber: Kathy Moorehead
Final Typist: Marilyn White

TAPE GUIDE -- Gaylord B. Parkinson

Date of Interview: November 21, 1978

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BILL ROBERTS

circa 1980

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Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

William E. Roberts

PROFESSIONAL CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT
AND THE CANDIDATE, 1960-1966

An Interview Conducted by
Sarah Sharp
in 1979

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

There were many fascinating aspects of the 1966 gubernatorial campaign in California. Not only was the winner, Ronald Reagan, a relative newcomer to the Republican party, but the many issues involved and Reagan's campaign techniques were also exciting elements. The short but significant interview which follows is a conversation with Bill Roberts, one member of the team of Spencer-Roberts, the campaign management firm in Los Angeles which supervised this first campaign in Reagan's political career. Along with the other interviews included in this volume, Roberts's own thoughts help to piece together the oral history of the campaign which ended Edmund G. Brown, Sr.'s years as governor of California.

Even though Mr. Roberts was in the midst of handling John Connally's presidential campaign, he kindly agreed to meet with this interviewer the day following a much earlier arranged interview with Ronald Reagan. Mr. Roberts and I met on 26 June 1979 in his suite of offices in Westwood at the edge of the UCLA campus, where his present public relations firm, The Dolphin Group, Inc., is located. On several walls of the outer and inner offices of The Dolphin Group were hung handsome color photographs of dolphins. On another wall was displayed a large swordfish. These and the other furnishings lent a warm and pleasant atmosphere to the busy office.

Mr. Roberts was dressed casually in a short-sleeved shirt and slacks for our interview. On the morning we met he had to be interrupted several times for telephone calls, signaling how busy he really was. At the beginning of our interview, Mr. Roberts seemed somewhat nervous and quiet. By the end of our one hour-and-a-half session, however, he was more relaxed and expansive. He tried to answer the questions asked him in a thoughtful manner. While Stu Spencer's interview discussed more of the actual techniques of campaigning, in this interview Mr. Roberts delved into the relationship between Reagan and the firm, and the day to day progress of the campaign. Roberts also shared highlights of Spencer-Roberts's earlier California campaigns. This firm was not just any campaign management organization. As Mr. Roberts explained, he and Stu Spencer believed in the political philosophies of the candidates they accepted as clients and they had a personal stake in helping them win.

Mr. Roberts reviewed the transcript of this interview quickly, making very slight changes in the wording only. He seemed to fully appreciate our production deadline. His thoughtful responses add up to a unique inside look at this most special gubernatorial campaign in California's political history.

Dr. Sarah Sharp
Interviewer-Editor

Governmental History Documentation Project IntervieweeYour full name William E. RobertsDate of birth JAN 13, 1925Father's full name William E. RobertsFather's place of birth GeorgiaMother's full name FELICE GARNESCHEMother's place of birth ST. LOUIS, MO.Where did you grow up? ST. LOUIS, MO. SANTA MONICA, CAL
PASS ROBERTS, CALIF.Education High SchoolEarly employment KEN CRANE TELEVISION, LOS ANGELES 1949-1955Positions held in state government NONE

Employment after leaving state government _____

I THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS OF SPENCER-ROBERTS, 1960-1964:
NELSON ROCKEFELLER AND OTHERS

[Date of Interview: 26 June 1979]##

Sharp: We know that you worked with Thomas Kuchel's running for re-election in 1962, and you worked on Nelson Rockefeller's presidential primary campaign in California in 1964. Those are the two campaigns that we understand you helped to run before 1966, so I thought I might ask you just a few questions about those. Firstly, how did you get the public relations job of running Kuchel's campaign for re-election in 1962?

Roberts: Well, I don't really recall how it came about. Spencer-Roberts started in 1960, in the general election, and our first campaigns were Al [Alphonzo] Bell's for Congress and John Rousselot's for Congress.* At that time John [Rousselot] was not a member of the John Birch Society; he joined subsequent to that. We did not handle his 1962 campaign because of the fact that he had become a member and we felt that it was a major liability. I note that he [Rousselot] has recently withdrawn from the John Birch Society and Stu [Spencer] is handling his campaign--so it's a small world.

We worked for several city council races in Los Angeles in 1961, as I recall; I don't even recall who for. But I had known some of the people around Tom Kuchel for some time and had gotten a little bit of an acquaintanceship going. We had from previous races made a number of contacts and somehow or another they communicated with us and we got involved in that race in 1962. But I really can't fill you in because I don't really know.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a tape segment has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 27.

*Both Bell and Rousselot won. Bell ran against Democrat Jerry Pacht for the sixteenth congressional district seat. Rousselot ran against Democrat George A. Kalem for the twenty-fifth congressional district seat.

Newsweek March 22, 1976

THE BACKROOM BOYS

Stuart Spencer and William Roberts, the men most responsible for turning President Ford's campaign around, have been working their political magic for Republican candidates for years—as Ronald Reagan well knows. Ten years ago when Reagan gave up acting for politics, he hired Spencer-Roberts to manage his California gubernatorial campaign. They helped make him governor then, and again in 1970, but Reagan never seemed overly grateful. Spencer-Roberts was one fence Reagan should have kept mended. Said Joseph Cerrell, a Democratic political consultant, last week: "They have come back to haunt him."

Spencer, 49, and Roberts, 51, first met doing volunteer work for the California Young Republicans in the 1950s. Ringing doorbells for Ike and Dick Nixon, Spencer, an Alhambra, Calif., recreation director, and Roberts, a portly TV salesman, quickly discovered their natural flair for grass-roots organizing. In 1960 they quit their jobs with the Los Angeles County Republican Committee to form their own political consulting firm. They quickly became masters of the slick, mediagenic and expensive style of running California campaigns. Along the way, they also earned a reputation as hard-knuckled pros who sold their services to the highest Republican bidder. Said Spencer: "I don't care about the issues. I care about the votes."

Rules: They take—and probably deserve—most of the credit for electing their first two clients, Alphonzo Bell and John Rousset, to Congress. In quick succession, Spencer-Roberts also handled a series of local campaigns in Los Angeles and in 1962 they ran the re-election of liberal Republican Sen. Thomas Kuchel. Then they moved on to the campaign that made their reputation as California's classiest pols for hire: Nelson Rockefeller's bitter 1964 primary battle against Barry Goldwater. One of Spencer's cardinal rules is that a candidate should never answer an attack. Instead of trying to defuse uneasiness over Rockefeller's divorce and quick remarriage, Spencer persuaded Rocky to attack Goldwater as an irrational extremist; Rocker-

feller's broadsides were capped by a final mailing that asked: "Whom do you want in the room with the H-bomb button?"

The strategy almost worked. Underdog Rocky came within .3 per cent of winning and Goldwater was so impressed by the team that he recommended them to Reagan. During the early days of the 1966 campaign, Reagan appeared awkward and stiff, but Roberts invented the term "citizen-politician." Explained Roberts: "Most people don't like politicians. If Reagan appeared a little uncertain, people would say, 'Well, he's not a professional.'" At night, the pair coached their candidate on how to answer tough questions with soft lobes and taught him to focus "The Speech" on those issues most likely to appeal to blue-collar Democrats. They relied on efficient telephone banks and superb grass-roots precinct work to do the rest. In a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans by 56 to 38 per cent, Reagan swamped the incumbent governor,

Edmund Brown Sr., by 1 million votes. After winning again for Reagan in 1970, Spencer-Roberts seemed to lose their magic. They lost several 1970 campaigns and managed no major races in 1972. In 1974, Roberts sold out to Spencer. "I learned I had diabetes in 1971," said Roberts. "Besides, I was getting tired of politics." Roberts kept busy with a project called "Threshold," training people as companions for the terminally ill. But last fall when he heard Spencer had signed on with the Ford campaign, he called his old partner to say he'd "be happy to help on any short-term projects." In January Roberts flew to Florida on 24 hours' notice to buttress the team's—and Ford's—remarkable comeback.

Complement: As political managers, the two complement each other. "Stu is more content in the back room, Bill up front leading the troops," says an associate. Spencer is tough, supercharged and earthy. Roberts is polite, soft-spoken and patient. He had resolved to go home and rest after Florida, but now Spencer (who replaced Howard Callaway last week as Ford's campaign manager) has him lined up to manage Ford's primary campaigns in Texas and Oregon. If Reagan means what he says about staying in the race, his old friends may hound his steps all the way to the California primary on June 8.

—SUSAN FRAKER with STEPHAN LESHER in Washington and MARTIN KASINDORF in Los Angeles

Roberts (left), Spencer: Guns for hire

Susan T. McElroy—Newsweek



Sharp: Do you know why you got the job?

Roberts: Well, I think we enjoyed a reasonably decent reputation and because of that the opportunity came. We had won both of the races in 1960, and won the [Los Angeles] city council races we were involved with, so we were getting a pretty good start. We didn't get any national reputation until later.

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Roberts: You're talking about something I remember nothing about. I don't know how we got into the Kuchel thing, or who recommended us. Earl Adams was a key guy in Tom Kuchel's campaign at that time--with the Adams, Duove & Hazeltine law firm.

Sharp: If we could go ahead then and talk about 1964--

Roberts: Yes, that's what I was going to talk about. In late 1962 after the Kuchel campaign, there were two special elections that were called: one up north for Don Clausen after Clem Miller had been killed in an airplane accident. (Miller actually got voted back into office so that there could be a special election to replace him.)

Then shortly after that one was called, one of the congressmen died down in L.A. County. Del Clawson ran in that seat in the old twenty-third congressional district--Downey and Southgate and Bell Gardens and through there.

We went into both of those specials--they [the congressional seats] had both been previously held by Democrats--and we won both of them. At that point, coming one right after another and the similarity of names and so forth, they got considerable press and we got quite a bit of notoriety from those two particular races nationally. Particularly with the Republican national congressional campaign committee, and with the Republican national committee.

And that led to our name being discussed at the national committee meeting, at least to the extent that George Hinman--who was the national committeeman from New York and Nelson Rockefeller's main political activist--heard about it. [Hinman] communicated with us and asked us whether we'd be interested in helping out on the Rockefeller campaign, and we naturally indicated we would be because we were aggressively seeking business.

We never hyphenated Republicanism. We didn't classify ourselves as conservative or liberal, but Republicans. We stayed with Republican campaigns because that was what we believed. And in this game, at least we felt that way, that you can't be a political whore to the extent that you go both ways. If you do, who trusts you? If you have a decent idea who do you give it to?

Roberts: There are companies who do handle both sides, but I have found not very successfully. There are the Joe Cerrells and the others on the Democratic side, Joe Neopolitan and many others. And, there are a great number on the Republican side, where a lot of the practice of professional [campaign] management began, beginning with [Clem] Whitaker and [Leone] Baxter.

We talked with George Hinman on one or two occasions and then went back to New York and sealed the deal with them about, I think, October or November of 1963. I do recall the trip--it was probably the biggest account at that time that we had ever had; I think we asked them for \$50,000 to run the primary. We wanted 25 percent in advance, because how could you possibly depend on a Rockefeller for money, you know? But no, seriously, we wanted it because we did have things to pay for and we didn't have much money.

Stu [Spencer] and I had started that business with \$500 each, and so we had never had a lot of dough in the thing. We ran it on a very low budget; we didn't have a secretary for a long time, we didn't have a very big show. Here today there's probably twelve or fourteen people working here, a far cry from what we were doing in those days.

I remember we went back and [George] Hinman had Nelson Rockefeller's office at the top of the Rockefeller Center way up there. You get an enormous view of New York. It was an exhilarating experience for them to hand us the \$12,500 check and say, "You're in business."

Sharp: How did that make you feel?

Roberts: Oh we were just truly elated and excited. We went to dinner that night, I remember, to celebrate our new contract. We went to a restaurant that I don't think is there anymore, Toot Shor's.

We went with a newsman by the name of Nick Thimmesch, who was a nationally syndicated writer for a number of newspapers, he's on television and so forth. Nick took us to dinner and he knew Toot Shor, so we got introduced to him and it was quite a big evening. Bob Considine, who is one of the writers for the Hearst papers, was there, and Nick brought him over and introduced us. He [Considine] took a few notes and was writing a few things down--we hardly even noticed that he was doing all these things--and then a few days later a national column appeared about us being involved in the Rockefeller campaign and so forth. That was the first time I guess we had had any really national publicity, and that was kind of exciting.

Roberts: Nick Thimmesch worked at that time for Time Magazine and had been assigned to the Rockefeller campaign. He covered it all throughout the primary; he would come out to California constantly. I bring him up because I want to mention one point about it a little bit later.

The Rockefeller campaign was, I think, and I think Stu [Spencer] might agree with me, the best campaign that we ever ran, before or since. I think we did more things right in that campaign, coming from a very long way back. In fact, right after we got the account, they showed us a survey that showed [Barry] Goldwater ahead 68 percent to 23. We hadn't even bothered to ask what it looked like.

We innovated because we were stuck with a lot of problems in that race. We did frankly, as I said, a lot more things right, correctly, in that race than other that we've ever done, I think.

Perhaps a lot of it was because we always had adequate financing in that campaign. You never went to a meeting saying, "Can we afford to do this?" or "Should we spend the money on this project or that project?" It was always a matter of "Is it a good idea? Is it the right thing to do? Is it the correct thing to do?" That was the only decision-making factor and I think that helped enormously.

Sharp: Was it left quite a bit up to you what ideas were put into action and what the money was spent for in Rockefeller's presidential primary campaign?

Roberts: We enjoyed in that race enormous freedom of action for two reasons. George Hinman was busy with many races all over the country, and he couldn't spend too much time in California. He did what he could. And by the way, [he is] one of the finest gentlemen I think I've ever met in politics, really. Many, many people in the country were for Rockefeller because George Hinman wanted them to be, and because they didn't want to offend George Hinman. He was that fine a man and that much of a gentleman, and still is today.

They gave us enormous freedom, because it was only a small California committee and it [the committee] was mainly [composed of] the establishment names of the state--Leonard Firestone and people of that caliber. While they were interested, they didn't participate on a daily basis. We'd have infrequent group meetings where there would be discussions of ideas and things but by and large the day to day was handled by Stu and myself.

Sharp: There was no sense then that the people who gave the money were the people in charge of the money?

Roberts: Well, there wasn't much money given in California to the Rockefeller campaign. Most of the money came from Rockefeller, and I guess it was therefore their decision who they wanted to have spend it and they decided that we were the correct ones. They had to repose their confidence in someone and so they reposed it in us, feeling that we knew what we were doing. And by and large I think we did know what we were doing.

There was a minimal amount of money, I think some \$25,000, was about all that was raised in California in the primary. Leonard Firestone I know tried real hard to raise money. People, after they got through laughing when he'd asked them for money for Rockefeller, would say, "Next time you see him, see if he'll loan me \$100,000 or something." And nobody took it seriously. And so of the \$25,000, I think Leonard himself gave \$5,000 of it. It was very difficult to raise money.

Finally, the California committee really almost gave up for intents and purposes and the money was mainly financed out of the East because not only was there a lot of Rockefeller money but there was also a lot of Rockefeller friends' money. In other words, he was into many, many businesses and ventures and activities, and these people were with him and so the culmination of all that was just enormous. And at that time there were not the same restrictions that there are today on a presidential campaign. People could give fairly good amounts of money and did.

As a matter of fact, I remember one incident about ten days before the election, and Rockefeller's treasurer called me from New York and said, "Bill, if you had \$200,000 more, what would you do with it?" I thought for a moment, and said, "Nothing." We had done just about everything we thought should be done; we had taken everything in the media up to what we thought was the hilt, and we felt going any further would only give strength to the point that Rockefeller was trying to buy the election. And so there was a stopping point for him. I think we wound up spending a million and a half, or \$2 million--I don't remember exactly--on that primary, which in those days was an enormous amount of money. Of course, Goldwater matched us dollar for dollar. In fact, he might have outspent us in the ultimate count of the money spent. And he [Goldwater] did it with much smaller contributions, of course, which made a lot of the difference here in California.

We [Spencer and Roberts] both divided up the responsibilities on that particular effort, and that was probably the only time on a major campaign that Stu and I both worked together, and worked full-time on an effort. He would handle certain phases like organization and schedule, and I would handle press relations and other things of this nature. I don't even remember how we divided

Roberts: up the responsibilities but each of us had three or four things to look at in the campaign. We were sitting right across from each other so we would pretty well know every damn phone call that was coming in, so we would know what was happening in the campaign pretty nicely.

We organized this particular campaign differently because we knew we didn't have the party apparatus. We knew we didn't enjoy the support of the party; they were about 85 or 90 percent for Goldwater. So we devised things that went around Goldwater, went around the party apparatus so to speak, to the general voter in the Republican party. We would have receptions, or we would invite everybody from the Santa Monica area let's say, or Palisades area, to come to a reception honoring Rockefeller. We'd have somebody prominent like Leonard Firestone or some other big name being the host and it would attract thousands.

We had many of those, and I would say the average was five to seven thousand people at those receptions. We had one or two that were really ripsnorters; they were over fifteen thousand. In fact, one time in the San Fernando Valley, on a rainy night, really pouring down rain, the police had to put a "sig" alert on the area because it was so jammed with traffic. They had to warn people to stay away from the area. They were turning away guests as far as six blocks away from the event because there was no parking, and the thing was jammed up. People were that excited to see Rockefeller and also they were somewhat interested to see some of the other luminaries that were also part of it.

Rockefeller would stand there by the hour shaking hands and we would try to sign people up, and we did sign up thousands. And we went around and built up our own organization that way. We sent out a lot of direct mail, we did some television spots, radio, billboards. Our theme was that he was the responsible candidate, trying to contrast it with some of what we felt at the time were irresponsible remarks that Goldwater made.

Sharp: Do you mean ideologically? Ideologically irresponsible or responsible?

Roberts: No, mostly with just day to day statements--not just philosophically reasonable. We were mainly trying to contrast Rockefeller as the more reasonable guy and the more responsible approach.

Sharp: It's interesting that you would say that because you didn't have the support of the Republican state central committee and some of the other institutionalized Republican units--

Roberts: And the volunteer groups were much bigger in those days than they are today--

Sharp: Yes, did that then force you to be more innovative, do you think? And that's why you now look back at the campaign--

Roberts: Yes, that was part of it that forced us, and frankly because we were on our own, and we wanted to try out some new ideas that I think helped it. We were younger and more eager in those days.

Frankly, I think during all the years that we've been in business Stu and I have both been innovators in political activity. We have not always gone with the status quo. Not that it's been a flamboyant thing, it has not. We were probably one of the first [campaign management firms] in the country to be using survey research, we set up our own company, we went through the whole gamut of studying electronic data processing as to how it would affect political campaigns. We discarded most of it because we found it was not workable, but we were trying everything for a long time.

Not that [use of these techniques] was very far along in the Rockefeller thing. It came subsequent to that. It was used more in the [Ronald] Reagan [gubernatorial] campaign [in 1966], and then in every election after that point. We've always been trying to do what we felt was putting our best foot forward. We had our own little plan, and we would deal from strength and stay on the offensive, and those little things helped us a lot.

We built a strong campaign for Rockefeller [in 1964]. I am convinced today that we would have won California and ended Goldwater's chances for the nomination for the presidency had Mrs. Happy Rockefeller not had the baby on that Saturday before the election. I remember earlier in the week I was being asked what kind of a problem it would be in the governor had to cancel his schedule and go back to be with Happy at the birth of their child. And I said, "Well, I don't know. I've never been faced with that in a campaign. My suggestion would be that it would be nice to have the baby on Wednesday"--not being familiar with the public reaction to these things. But I think that the baby's birth served to bring out again, to the women's attention especially, the problem that we dealt with during the whole campaign--that he was a wife-stealer, and that she was a home-wrecker.

I remember we sent out a mailing asking for recruits to all the registered Republicans in the state, which you couldn't even consider doing today because of the postage rates but in those days you could. It might have cost us \$100,000 or \$200,000 to do the mailers. Today it would cost millions. We sent this out with a first-class return card and we got back thousands of responses from people saying they would work on the campaign. But we also got back thousands of responses that had this written across, "I don't want that bitch in the White House," and things of that nature--really very derogatory things.

Roberts: I think we stored all of that stuff just for the record. In fact, all of the records that we might have of the [Nelson] Rockefeller campaign or the [Ronald] Reagan campaign up to that time that I sold my interest to Stu [Spencer], which was about early 1973, Stu would either have or they would be gone.

You might consider asking him for those because I think it's about time that those should be released and they may be of some real value to you. That's because they deal with all kinds of correspondence and literature. We kept everything. I think we were thinking of a long time ago of maybe donating the library to some school.

I mentioned a little while ago about Nick Thimmesch. You know, we got a reputation, a national reputation, during the Rockefeller campaign--even though we lost it--that we had done a good job. There was a lot of national press coming in on that campaign to California. Many of them from the East had never seen the phenomenon of professional campaign management. And so a number of them took the time out from their Rockefeller/Goldwater reporting and did a story on professional campaign management. Well many of them centered on us, and so we got a great deal of national, and even international press off of that race.

Particularly, we got strong support out of Time Magazine--because of Nick Thimmesch. Week after week, he'd be talking about the Rockefeller campaign but he'd also mention the "crack Spencer-Roberts firm" or something of this nature; he'd always get us in there. Well, that wasn't a matter of talent, in my mind. It was a matter that he knew us, and liked us, and my sister married his brother. So [laughter], there are a lot of things in life that don't revolve around any talent.

In that race, I think we did deserve a reasonable amount of good reaction because we did do so many things correctly. Frankly we've been around the business so long now, I think both of us really know what we're doing, which comes I guess with osmosis if nothing else. After a number of years you make a lot of mistakes and you learn.

I enjoyed the Rockefeller campaign. I think he was a tremendous candidate. He spent a great deal of time coming in and out of here, trying to win. He was one of the few men--other than the man that I'm working for today, John Connally, who I think a great deal of. He was one of the few men who I ever worked for in my life who I thought ought to be president.

Sharp: Did you get to know Rockefeller very well, could you say?

Roberts: Reasonably well. Well enough to make that statement. He was a tremendous person, he had a great passion, a great feeling for people, a great sense of history.

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Sharp: Even though it wasn't a successful one, you recall Rockefeller's presidential primary campaign in 1964 in California favorably?

Roberts: Well, yes, because of the number of projects we did and the number that we did right.

Some of the people that worked on that campaign are very active still today. This lady in the next room, Sue Glad, was involved with our Pasadena office for Rockefeller; and Vince Barraba, who is now the director of the census, was one of our field men and operated out of the Pasadena office.

We had another field man who went to jail during the middle of the campaign for robbing Western Union offices on his lunch hour. You can imagine what an embarrassment that was to us! Here we were paying him \$800 a month, I think, and thinking, "Wow, he wears nice boots and alligator shoes and everything." And I thought "Well God, he must live in a hovel and spend all his money on clothes." That didn't bother me. I didn't ask him.

One afternoon the police called and said, "Do you have so-and-so working for you?" I said, "Yes." [they said] "We've got him here and he's under suspicion for robbing about twenty Western Union offices--armed."

It turned out, he would rob them in a most nonchalant manner. He'd just saunter in, show them the gun, and rob them, and walk out without any great speed and go get in his car and go. He was doing this while he was working for us on the campaign. [laughter] He spent a few years in prison. Needless to say, we let him go--that afternoon. We had a lot of unusual and different people in the campaign.

Sharp: What do you think contributed most to the loss in California then?

Roberts: I think probably the reawakening of the women's unhappiness with his marriage.

Sharp: More than any ideological--

Roberts: Yes, more than--well, the ideological thing was always there--but I think more than anything their feelings about him and about Happy [Rockefeller], because two homes got chopped up there. A lot of women could put themselves in the first Mrs. Rockefeller's

Roberts: shoes very easily. Many Republican women were quite active in the Women's Federation [Federation of Republican Women], a lot of them were in that age group, and so I think that probably did more to at least give them something to talk about than anything else. I think other than that, we would have won. I think we were winning right up to the last minute. We didn't lose by much--I think a half percent.

Sharp: Right, a very small percentage.

II RONALD REAGAN'S GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN, 1965-1966

Accepting Ronald Reagan as a Client

Sharp: Well, let's move on and talk about [Ronald] Reagan's gubernatorial campaign. I divided it into three chronological periods: 1965; early 1966, before the primary; and then the months after the primary, through the general election in November, 1966.

For 1965; I was wondering if you could tell me what you remember about the period of negotiation before you accepted Ronald Reagan as your client at Spencer-Roberts for the campaign.

Roberts: Well, we first got a call from a gentleman who is now a judge. His name is Thaxton, out in the San Fernando Valley. He said that he had been talking to some of the Reagan people, and would we consider talking to Ronald Reagan about the possibility of working on the gubernatorial race? Our general policy had always been to talk to everybody, whether we get involved with them or not.

So we said, "Yes, we'd be very happy to talk about it." In fact, we had a good feeling about Reagan because we thought he'd done awfully well previously. I remember we mentioned in a couple of little newsletters about how tremendous we thought he [Reagan] was as a speaker. We thought he was going places and we were impressed with the way he had handled himself in the Goldwater campaign.

So, we had a meeting--I think it was at the Cave de Roy here in Los Angeles (which is a kind of semi-private club)--and this fellow Thaxton was in it, Ronald Reagan, and Reagan's brother [Neill] "Moon". And there was Stu and myself, and I'm not sure whether we had Fred Haffner in that meeting or not. We had a northern California operation that we'd set up during the Rockefeller campaign with Fred Haffner in it. I know he [Fred Haffner] was in subsequent meetings. We discussed things

Roberts: back and forth and the possibilities and so forth, and the general thing that came out of the meeting was that we would agree to meet again. We were favorably impressed on our first gathering.

But we had heard a lot of things about Ronald Reagan from people--that he was difficult to get along with, that he was a martinet, that he was just tough and not easy to work with. We found that to be completely the opposite. As a matter of fact, Ronald Reagan is probably one of the easiest candidates I've ever worked with in my life. He never really got too mad at anything other than major last minute changes in his schedule--he would be unhappy with that. But very easy to work with.

Anyway, we had agreed that we would meet again at his [Reagan's] home, with Fred Haffner, Stu and myself. That was the first time I met Nancy [Mrs. Ronald] Reagan. I don't recall whether Holmes Tuttle or any of the other men who had gotten Reagan started to begin with were there or not. They might have been there, one or two of them; Holmes Tuttle could have been in that meeting.

We [Spencer and Roberts] talked about this issue generally because we wanted to know, is this a right wing nut or what--because we didn't want to get involved in that kind of situation. Not that it would make a difference to us. We always had our own feelings about things. We haven't let them show particularly in campaigns but we do care who we're working for and what we're doing. So there are a lot of times that we said no--a hell of a lot of times.

We had the meeting and nothing happened, so we decided at the end that we'd have another gathering. About a week later everybody got together at Ron's place on San Onofre in Pacific Palisades for another meeting, again discussing the issues and just generally getting better acquainted.

At the end of that conversation, which lasted maybe two or three hours, Ronald Reagan finally thought: You know, enough of this, we've had enough meetings. He said, "Well, are you or aren't you?" And by that time, by the third meeting, we had kind of made up our minds that we probably would say yes anyway and so we said, "Yes, we think we will."

Sharp: This was early in 1965?

Roberts: Yes, this was in May of 1965.

Sharp: I want to show you this memo that I found in Governor Reagan's gubernatorial papers at the Hoover Institution, and ask you if you remember calling this meeting and if you remember what

Sharp: transpired at the meeting?*

Roberts: Well, obviously I called the meeting and this is a brilliantly written memo--[laughter].

Sharp: All on one sheet of paper, the way it should be. [laughter]

Roberts: Right. And concise.

Sharp: The memo shows the flow, where the campaign had gotten to at that point in October, 1965.

Roberts: Yes. Well, it [the campaign] started out with just the four people--plus Reagan, I mean, and his immediate family--but plus the four people, Cy [A.C.] Rubel, as chairman of the Friends' group; Holmes Tuttle; our third one was Henry Salvatori; and the fourth one, I'm trying to think of who the fourth one was [looking through papers]. I'm just sure it wasn't [Justin] Dart, he wasn't active at that time.

Sharp: We thought that Mr. Dart probably came in later.

Roberts: Yes, I think he did. But there was a fourth one and I frankly can't remember who it is now. Anyway, I'll find it. I thought I might see it in this list here.

Sharp: These are two other lists of donors that probably crossed your desk at some point, also from the Ronald Reagan papers at the Hoover, and they might refresh your memory.

Roberts: I'm afraid not.

Anyway, we decided to organize a Friends' group and one of the first things we did was to try to get an expansion of the group and started asking some people to support it. With some big names asking you can always get some commitment and so we got the Friends' group quickly under way.

*This memo was printed on "Friends of Ronald Reagan" letterhead and addressed to "Steering Committee and Finance Leadership." The memo outlined what would be discussed at this major strategy meeting scheduled for 17 October 1965.

Roberts: During the summer months and into the fall of 1965, we were busily moving Reagan around, having him speak to Republican groups a lot and having him do some public stuff, doing a lot of organizational work trying to get our own community and county chairmen, things of this nature, which we did a pretty good job of. We started doing some mailings to find out how we were doing with the public in various assembly districts. We'd just pick an assembly district and mail the whole district and see if we couldn't get enough returns out of it to mail to the next one. And we did. We would get more than enough, maybe by five or six or \$7000 over the cost to mail the next one. So we would mail the next one. We just kept doing that, mainly around the L.A. area and that helped get a lot of interest going and a lot of people signed up during an off-year.

We did a great number of things to strengthen our hand with the [Republican] party. We put on some rather large receptions when the state central committee met in September of 1965 in San Francisco, mainly because we were in George Christopher's back yard and he was the main opponent, although there were several other people running in that race. I can't remember their names.

Mr. Reagan's Own Campaign Plans

Sharp: By the time you met with Mr. Reagan at this point, in May and June of 1965, had he already decided that he was going to run for governor?

Roberts: Oh yes. He had decided, I'm sure, before that and these men had prevailed upon him, but he had gotten a huge reaction from the general public all over the country. He showed me some boxes of letters that he had gotten from literally all over the nation--thousands of them--asking him to do something, run for something, all for the major speeches that he made for Goldwater, in particular the speech "A Time for Choosing" that he made towards the end of the campaign.

Many of them were from California--probably four or five thousand of them--and he separated out the California ones. That gave us a start of a group [to] which we mailed [letters] to get signed up [to work for him].

Reagan was literally a one-man band when we met him. He didn't have any help; he had one secretary that came in a couple of times a week in his home to answer some letters. He literally opened, read, and answered all his mail. He'd answer all his phone calls, he'd handle his own schedule, and he drove himself to meetings--

Roberts: at that time he didn't fly. I was amazed. I said, "Who's helping you on this? Who's helping you on that?" He said, "Nobody. Me. I'm doing it." We naturally had to change that a little bit very quickly to get a lot of that detail work off of him. But this was how he was handling it at the beginning.

As a side thing, I think one of the reasons that he wanted us involved--other than that we'd had some reasonably good successes--was that Goldwater--told him he would never run a campaign in California without having Spencer-Roberts involved. Ron had gone to see Goldwater in Arizona and they'd been friends for a long time, and asked him what he thought when he [Reagan] thought he was going to run. He respected us as enemies at that point. That was one of the reasons we got the account.

Sharp: There was no point, then, that anybody had to convince Ronald Reagan to run for governor?

Roberts: I don't think so. I think he wanted to do it. I think he enjoyed the challenge. His movie career was just moving along in an average way. He was mostly on television as a matter of fact. He was getting good notoriety from that, and making good money, but he was really, I think, sold on the whole project of doing it way before we ever showed up or else we wouldn't have had our meetings and the thing wouldn't have gone that far. Because if he had had just a passing interest, he wouldn't have gotten as aggressive on the whole organizational thing as he did.

Sharp: Did he impress you as a winner?

Roberts: Oh, very definitely. He is, as I said, one of the nice guys that I've met in politics. He is a person of great compassion; he is a person of a tremendous sense of humor, which I think is much needed in politics. You've got to be able to laugh at your own mistakes once in a while. You don't have to take everything so deadly serious because I find the world little notes most politicians. There are the real serious ones but what they're serious about I couldn't tell you. He was just an easy-going person. Obviously bright. Very retentive. Here was a guy that you could have a meeting with like we're having here right now; and, while I'm terrible at remembering meetings--I can't remember where I was last week--could recall, once you refresh him, that you did meet and the circumstances. He would recall to you much of what was discussed at the meeting, what you said, what he said, and so forth. He's very retentive that way.

He's very bad on names; he can't remember names. I think I was working for him for two or three months before he finally really got my name down pat. He'd try every variation he could

Roberts: remember. I think that was the product of his having been very involved and meeting people for a number of years and so it just went in one ear and out the other.

He never did get good at names. In fact, that was one of our problems during the campaign. He couldn't remember the chairman's name and so forth. But I don't fault him for that. That is just something that takes training to do, over a long period of time, and he's just been too involved the other way.

On the other hand, by the way, one person in your study, Goodwin Knight, probably was one of the best people for remembering names that I have ever seen. You could have a meeting with him right now, say, and then a year later he'd come up and say, "How's your research work going, Sarah?" And you'd sit back like this [feigns surprised expression], because you may not have seen him for a year. But he could remember names.

Sharp: Yes. I have heard that about Governor Knight from a lot of other people who I've interviewed.

Roberts: Oh, an unbelievable talent in that regard. I've never seen anybody like that before or since.

The Political Education of a Candidate

Sharp: I'd like to ask you about some of the political education of Ronald Reagan--how he learned what to say about the issues, how he schooled himself, and how you helped him be informed. In the Reagan papers I found seven big, black binders that had all kinds of information in them and which was divided up into budget, finances, health and welfare, education, all of these different headings. All the information was behind these headings, what the major problems were for the state and what sorts of remedies were suggested.

We know that you used an issues research firm called BASIC0, with Dr. Stanley Plog and Dr. Kenneth Holden. I found quite a few memos from you to them and from them to you about this kind of education and what was needed in terms of getting Ronald Reagan to know what being governor was going to be like and what he was going to need to know. How did you get those people?

Roberts: Well, he came on to this thing with probably the same kind of knowledge that you or I would have of government, not being directly involved to the point that we need to know a lot about an

Roberts: issue. We have a general idea about what's going on with a lot of issues. And so he had a need, since he was not a politician really, to get boned up enough so that people wouldn't be unhappy with him over that point--which could be devastating for somebody who's a movie actor, you know. People might think, "Well, [he's] not too bright--another movie actor."

So we attacked it on several fronts. It wouldn't have worked at all if he wasn't a good learner and a good reader. He's a voracious reader, by the way. He'd read in the evening for hours. So he's a constant learner.

The first thing we did was get Assemblyman Charles Conrad with him. Charlie was one of the really knowledgeable people concerning the laws of the legislature--how it functions, the rules--and also the guidelines and restrictions of the governor's office--what they could and couldn't do. In other words, he was a valuable person in teaching Reagan where the bathroom was and all the mechanical things of the powers of the governor, the powers of the executive, the powers of the legislative--, and the separation of them, and so forth. Charlie met with him regularly for quite a period of time, and filled him in as they went along so that he got a working familiarity with the basics.

Another way we did help him with issues was to hire BASICo, not to do what they claimed later that they did for him--they were hired strictly to do the research on issues, and for no other reason.

Sharp: Did you mean for this to be objective, basic research?

Roberts: Well, as far as you can get research objective. You very rarely do, because there's always a bias built into one side or the other.

But we tried to get some bibliography as well as people who were experts in those areas, such as water, agriculture, and whatever the problems were in California--and they were numerous--to sit down with Ronald Reagan and talk those over and he would listen. Naturally he would get their bias on their pet projects and so forth, but he'd also get a lot of information about the situation. We tried to present both sides of the issue so that he would get an idea of what position he might want to take.

It didn't always work out 100 percent but we did have a constant series of his meeting with individuals or small groups that were experts in various issues and backgrounds, some set up by BASICo, some set up by others. This process continued fairly steadily.

Roberts: I tried to put it on a basis of saying, "Okay, Ron, how do you like to have this information on issues presented to you? If we can do it in a position paper and give you the pros and cons, and what generally the situation is, and then if you want more information on it, if you want to go deeper into it, just say so and we will then start giving you bibliography and more information, and more people to study it. The ultimate decision being yours."

The ultimate decision rests with the candidate as to what he wants to do, because I found that if you try to force decisions down candidates that they neither believe nor want, all you succeed in doing is getting them in trouble because they'll forget it as soon as they've done it. Then when it comes up again at the press conference a week later, they can't remember because it wasn't in their head and their heart.

We did that completely with Ronald Reagan because he wanted it that way. We just said, "Look Ron, all the issue stuff is your bag. You just tell us how you want it, and we'll give it to you as quickly and solidly as we can. You make up your own mind. If you want our opinions or somebody else's, ask, and so forth. Once a decision is made, then we'll sit with you and say, 'Okay, now, which of these issue positions you have should we stress the most? Where should we really concentrate in issues where we find maybe there's general interest on the part of the public?'"

In other words, we're not talking about expediency, we're talking about emphasis. Frankly, this is the only way you can handle it.

And many a time he answered questions that weren't popular, for him, in question and answer sessions--but that didn't mean that he needed to make a major topic of his address that day.

Another technique we used with him to disarm the public and make them feel that he did know what he was talking about, and he had some knowledge of the issues, was to have a question and answer session--to insist on a question and answer session after each speech.

##

Sharp: About BASICO, periodically throughout the campaign Plog and Holden sent Mr. Reagan memos explaining issues and suggesting a stance that he should take. For instance, one was dated April 14th, 1966, on the constitutionality of Proposition 14, the anti-fair housing proposition. The memo said that Ronald Reagan should say thus and

Sharp: so if the proposition was declared constitutional, and then he should say something else if it was declared unconstitutional.

Roberts: Many times when they might offer, gratuitously, an opinion, it was something that we did not ask for. As a matter of fact, my unhappiness with [BASICO's] approach grew during the campaign time, and during the general election they had very little to do with his issue work. I kept them away from him, as a matter of fact, a couple of times, because I was not satisfied with the way it was going and the way it was being presented.

Sharp: Was that because you thought they were trying to influence him one way or another too much?

Roberts: Oh, it could have been just a general personality disagreement, or something, I don't remember exactly. It could have been around issues. It could have been around their general conduct, but I do know that I was not happy with them toward the end of the campaign. Not in the primary, particularly, but in the general election. They did not have as much access to Ronald Reagan in the general election as they did in the primary. Of course, he'd come a long way already on issues and so forth.

But as far as how he absorbed all of this, how he assimilated it, or how he finally decided, I think you'd have to ask him.

The "Eleventh Commandment"

Sharp: Okay. I'd like to ask you about the role of the Republican state central committee in the primary period, and specifically about the role of Dr. Gaylord Parkinson as chairman of that committee. He had developed what he called his "Eleventh Commandment."*

Roberts: He was on the surface neutral, and behind the scenes very much pro-Reagan.

Sharp: What did Dr. Parkinson do as chairman in the pre-primary period to help Ronald Reagan?

*Dr. Parkinson's "Eleventh Commandment" was, "Thou shalt not speak ill of any Republican."

Roberts: Well, the creation and implementation of the "Eleventh Commandment" was probably the best thing he accomplished. That was done with our approval, and with us involved in the creation of the "Eleventh Commandment." Remember it was finally put together at a committee meeting up in the San Jose area.

The main guy who put it together in Parkinson's office was a guy by the name of Bob Walker, who went subsequently into the Reagan administration, but is now working with Coors over in Colorado. It was his wording, for the main part, and a general consensus on everybody's part that we needed it, because we felt that we were in the lead, and we didn't want any divisiveness in the party, and [we thought] this might go a long way toward avoiding a big party fight--a fight philosophical, somewhat, in nature, with [George] Christopher representing the more liberal Republicans and Reagan representing the more conservative. We wanted to avoid a 1964, and this was a good way to do it. Nineteen sixty-four was a blood bath in California's Republican primary. We certainly did not want to repeat it.

It was not done with any grand thoughts in mind. It was done purely, selfishly for that election, and that election alone. In later years it became something more than that--it became national in use. But it was designed and put together for a very narrow, selfish interest of ours, and that was to keep from having a big battle in the party. And it worked!

There weren't very many other ways the party could help. They don't raise--they didn't in those days--raise a lot of money for candidates--

Sbarp: You mean the Republican state central committee?

Roberts: That's right. They don't generally do that. They're doing it more today than they did then, and it's mainly for assembly and state senate candidates. They very rarely give money to constitutional candidates.

They did have meetings and platforms where we could speak, but they did for all the candidates. I really can't say other than that one major move that there was anything else of any real consequence.

Working Towards the General Election

Sharp: Now that you had won the primary, what did you think was the main problem you had to work on as far as the general election was concerned? Or did you think you had any problems?

Roberts: Oh yes, we had problems. This is a Democratic state, three to two. Has been. Still is. I don't recall, really, what I thought our major problem was. I know we were doing some surveying trying to find out what the best issues were at the moment, what the people were most interested in.

One of the things that came up, and it came up from the public, not from the surveys, but from the meetings [Ronald] Reagan went to, was that he started getting questions about the school violence that was going on. So he got a little stronger in that whole area and started working it into this speech pretty regularly. That issue turned out to be a very strong one in the fall as the rioting increased on the campuses and the public became more and more unhappy with it.

I think probably it served a major purpose in getting the average electorate together and out to the polls, and wanting to do something. In other words, civil unrest is never really a happy situation. Those who were not involved, which represent the majority of the public, wanted somebody who was going to deal with it a little more aggressively and strongly. So I think that action helped Ronald Reagan quite a bit.

We were interested, of course, in keeping our party together for the fall, and getting at least 90 percent or more fidelity from the Republican voters. Plus, we were trying to figure out ways that we could get in to the Democratic community, and we did come up with a couple of good approaches.

We did a lot of work in the Mexican-American community. Almost none in the black. There were no votes there to speak of. But, we managed to get almost 25 percent of the Mexican-American vote who were very unhappy with [Governor Edmund G., Sr.] Brown over a lot of things, appointments and so forth, and so we took advantage of that unrest. In fact, our battle cry that we had was "Y Basta," which means, generally, "Enough. We've had it." We put it on bumper strips and on signs. It served as a pretty good battle cry for our campaign in the Mexican-American community and it worked.

Roberts: We went to all the parades and gatherings and everything we could find in the way of schedules. Reagan was good on schedules. He wouldn't mind doing sometimes six to eight meetings a day. And holding up, he did--unless he'd catch a cold or something. If he'd catch the flu or something, boy, he'd go down for two or three days, and I mean just clump. He wouldn't be worth a damn. But for the most part he was very healthy, and he didn't mind a schedule at all except when you changed schedules on him at the end of a day, or something like that. All of a sudden you'd say, "Ron, we've got a dinner meeting we're going to," and he'd been planning on going home. Then he'd get unhappy. Not stay unhappy but certainly show his unhappiness.

He's very much a home person, very much--. His idea of a nice evening is to just spend it at home with family and have a nice dinner and watch T.V., and read a little bit, and go to bed. He is not a person who enjoyed the, what you might call the Hollywood social life. He very rarely went to cocktail parties. He very rarely drinks much. He just is not interested in that circuit at all, so he would really be disappointed if his pleasures of the evening, of being home, were taken away from him.

Sharp: I'd like to ask you to comment on something. When people like Earl Warren were the candidates, the candidates seemed to run the campaign. But now, the campaign management firms like yourself have a much greater hand in determining how a candidate acts, what he says and where he goes. I wonder if you could comment on that change.

Roberts: Well, I won't agree with that statement. We have an importance in direct ratio to the kind of candidate we're dealing with, and the confidence they repose in us.

In the Reagan campaign, it started out slowly, and during time more and more responsibility was placed with us and more and more they came to respect our judgment, and as a consequence we were given a lot more freedom. But we still functioned with a steering committee, and we still had the finance committee to report to. We still had a candidate to talk to, and our attitude has always been that the candidate has veto power over whatever recommendations are made. His name is on it--he has to live with it.

Now, as I said, there are varying candidacies and campaigns. In those instances where there are candidates with strong ideas on how to campaign, you'll generally have less to say on the activities and they have a lot more. Where they don't feel qualified, where they feel it's an area that they are ignorant of, then they rely more on those who have been around for a long time.

Roberts: A good example today would be the John Connally campaign. We're involved with him in the six western states. Well, John Connally has been in politics for many years, he understands it, and he takes a great interest in all the activities of his campaign. And to the extent that he wants, he runs those activities--his schedule for instance, and other activities of the campaign. He also has a good working knowledge of what's going on in the whole effort.

Other candidates who haven't been around that long, like a Ronald Reagan, how can they possibly say, this or that's the best when they have never campaigned. At that time he had never had any experience hardly, in campaigning, other than limitedly for Goldwater and a few other candidates. But he really didn't have that knowledge and so frankly we did know more than he did in the approaches and so forth.

It varies is what I'm saying, in answer to your question. That's why I say I don't buy a flat statement like that. Because it varies tremendously with the kind of individual you're working for. So you can't just make a flat statement that managers tend to dominate the campaign and the candidates are very secondary figures.

You wouldn't want it anyway because they [the candidates] are out front so much with press conferences and meetings and things, that if they were, as you said, less involved and less knowledgeable about what they were doing, they would have a tendency to make a lot more mistakes. So no matter how much involvement or responsibility we had, we always make a point of keeping the candidate heavily aware of what we are doing and how it's going and what's happening. So if he says, "Wait a minute, Bill. I don't like that," or "I can't live with it," we can stop things before they get started.

Sharp: I'd like to ask a few questions about financing. I'm not sure how much more time you'd like to spend with me today.

Roberts: [looking at watch] Kind of running out of time. Okay. Go ahead.

Sharp: I wondered how much control the major fund raisers had over you as a campaign management firm throughout the campaign. You spoke briefly about it for the Rockefeller campaign. I wonder if you could contrast it with what you found in the Reagan campaign?

Roberts: Well, the finance committee met pretty regularly and it was a pretty fair-sized committee, some fifteen or twenty people. I think most of our major plans and budgets went through the finance committee, and got their general approval and understanding of

Roberts: what direction we were going. They had a pretty good knowledge of what we wanted to commit to every day because we've never been in the habit of running deficit campaigns. We always wanted to keep the finance [chairman] and the treasurer aware of what big expenditures might be coming up so that there were adequate finances to do it. We didn't implement anything without monies being available.

I think they all had a nice, even healthy interest in the campaign, and I would have to say had quite a bit to contribute to the direction of the effort. I don't think they dominated it, or wanted to dominate it, but I think they wanted to have their say. A lot of times it is easy to have their say, as far as finance is concerned, by just saying, "We don't have the money," or "We can't raise it." So the question automatically answers itself.

So to that extent, they did have a major interest, but they were never oppressive. They were never pushy or anything else about it. They always generally bowed to the pure political decisions and policy in most matters, but always wanted to be aware of what was happening and, on occasion, put in their recommendations and so forth.

I had a pretty good working relationship with the finance team. They did a good job of raising money. I don't think anybody in the Reagan campaign put in over \$25,000. I don't recall anybody who put any more than that in. There may have been one or two that did. But they [the financiers] were very anxious from the very beginning that he not have any strings on him when he went to the governorship and no money was ever accepted, of any kind, with any kind of a string attached to it.

I remember one individual particularly who was anxious to get something accomplished, and also, in return, was very happy to be a contributor of \$25,000. He made it clear that he was hopeful that he would get some consideration. His check was sent back to him. He did not become a contributor in the campaign because they [the financiers] would just not let any individual dominate Reagan's administration. I think Ronald Reagan therefore went in as probably one of the freer souls, as governor, than anybody in recent campaign history.

Money was not hard to raise. We raised it then with a lot of small contributions by direct mail. We raised it with a lot of gatherings, parties of various kinds--cocktail parties, dinners, and so forth. Also we did a lot of direct eyeball, one-on-one, will-you-give-me-some-money type of phone calls and meetings. They were always able to keep ahead of our needs, financially, and I think the campaign wound up with a reasonable surplus.

Sharp: Did you have any role in the transition period after November 1966?

Roberts: I did not have any role except limited. On occasion, we would get a phone call from someone on the transition team concerning someone who they were considering for a job and they happened to maybe have been working in the campaign, or happened to be a volunteer or something. So they'd say, "What do you think of this person?" and "What do you think of that person?" We'd tell them what our thoughts were and how they worked and so forth.

But we had no working relationship with the governor, and our general policy then and today is kind of a love 'em and leave 'em policy. You do your campaign, you do your chore, and you go on to the next one. We did not want to get involved in the governmental operation in Sacramento. We're in a separate business. We're in the campaign business and they're in the administration business.

So we really never had much of a working relationship other than that we always got along with Reagan. I still think a great deal of the man. I don't care very much for some of the people around him but I do think that he is a very decent soul. As a matter of fact, I make a point of needling some of those who are close around him that the only time he's ever won was when we were with him, and he hasn't won since. This rankles some of them.

Sharp: Are you predicting or--? [laughter]

Roberts: Yes. Of course. I think John Connally is going to be the [presidential] nominee [in 1980].

But I just never had a desire to get involved in state government at any level. I might call them up someday and curse and say, "God damn, this is a lousy way to treat the world. Somebody's been mistreated. Will you see them or talk to them about it?"

It would have been very easy for us, for example, to have opened up an office in Sacramento like a lot of attorneys do. All of a sudden they've got clients running all over everywhere because they happen to know some people. We could have done that very easily. In fact, we had several calls from private enterprise saying, "Would you guys like to do this project or that project?"

But they all involved lobbying up in Sacramento and all involved, frankly, influence peddling. We were not interested in the projects and we just said, "No." We could have done very well, I think, if we'd have wanted to. Perfectly legal, but not what I like. And never have.

Sharp: Well just briefly, is there anything we have not covered about the 1966 campaign that you would like to comment on? Whether it was dealing with the issues, or anything else?

Roberts: Oh, there were a million things happening in the campaign that you might want to mention. I can't think of anything offhand. It's kind of enjoyable reminiscing and thinking back on some of these things reminds me of, you know, some things I'd forgotten about.

Sharp: Well, I think you remembered an awful lot. You remembered what we wanted you to remember, anyway--what the day to day progress of the campaign was like, and that's the kind of stuff that is very difficult to understand from reading a set of personal papers, a governor's papers, because of the volume.

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Final Typist: Matthew Schneider

TAPE GUIDE -- William E. Roberts

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Stuart Spencer
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Stuart K. Spencer

DEVELOPING A CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

An Interview Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
in 1979

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

In this relatively short interview, Stuart Spencer provides a disarming, lively insight into the spirit of entrepreneurship and the development of political campaign management in the 1960s. After several successes as a volunteer Young Republican campaigner and on the staff of the Los Angeles County Central Committee, he set up his own firm on a shoestring with partner William Roberts and set out to improve on the campaign techniques he had observed being practised by Whitaker and Baxter and Baus-Roos, pioneer California political public relations professionals of the 1950s.

The new partners were fortunate in starting out with good contacts with influential Republicans seeking to establish electable candidates and in the innovations in data collection and analysis available for their use. Spencer describes the refining of demographic studies and opinion-research techniques made possible by computer technology and notes wryly that they frequently were vying with Democratic strategists using the same methods. Spencer-Roberts found these methods notably useful in the California Plan, geared to selecting target districts around the state likely to elect Republicans for special election efforts.

He then goes on to summarize the presidential nomination efforts of Barry Goldwater and Nelson Rockefeller, the development of Ronald Reagan as a candidate, and the shaping of his 1966 campaign for governor. The key to success, in Spencer's view, is a total plan for all aspects of the campaign, within a framework of what the candidate believes and with safeguards to keep the candidate from making mistakes.

Along the way, Spencer touches on campaign finance, efforts to increase voter involvement, and the increasing role of the media in elections. "The press," he concludes, "is the big referee of this whole ball game" of politics. "It's out there to keep us honest."

The interview was recorded on February 23, 1979, in Spencer's sunny office overlooking the marina in Laguna Beach. In comfortable sailing clothes, he chatted easily over coffee and cigarettes, winding up the session when it was time for a lunch appointment. He reviewed the edited transcript of the interview promptly, making only minor revisions and emendations.

Bill Roberts' companion interview in this volume provides further details of Republican party campaigning. The Democratic party approach to the ever-fascinating mechanics of election campaigns is discussed in interviews for the Knight-Brown era study of California government by Don Bradley and Bert Coffey.

Gabrielle Morris
Interviewer-Editor

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I BEGINNING A CAREER IN POLITICS
[Interview 1: February 23, 1979]##

Southern California Young Republican

Morris: Could you give us a little bit of background on yourself and how you came to be interested in politics?

Spencer: It wasn't a premeditated or planned thing. In the 1950's, when I was director of parks and recreation for the City of Alhambra, in southern California, politics became an avocation--I became involved in the Young Republicans.

Pat Hillings was a new congressman in that area--the San Gabriel Valley--having replaced Dick Nixon who went for the Senate; he was a young fellow--roughly my age. He attracted young people to him. I was active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce and a lot of those fellows were active in the Young Republican movement, and so I got involved as a volunteer--deeply involved to the point that--Johnny Rousselot was involved; Bill Roberts, my former partner; Emily Pike, up in San Francisco, who was a P.R. for Bill Bagley. The attrition has taken over, but a lot of them are still around. It was during the Eisenhower era.

Morris: So from the beginning you were involved and got to know people statewide.

Spencer: And nationally in the Young Republicans. So, after I was involved in that political process--they're always looking for new people--it's still true today--I received some job offers and I kept turning them down.

Morris: Job offers?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a tape segment has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 39.

Spencer: Well, to work for candidates or to work for party organizations, or office holders of the Republicans. I might preface this by saying that when I first registered, I registered as a Democrat in 1948--Truman I guess. I was a registered Democrat, and I horsed around in college a little bit in some Democratic organizations; but, if you remember that era, we had the Independent Progressive party with Henry Wallace and we had lots of communists on campus.

Morris: Did you go to college here in L.A.?

Spencer: I went to East Los Angeles Junior College and L.A. State College, which is now Cal State L.A. or something. They were minority-type colleges and had a lot of activists. The Young Democrat stuff that I had gone to was not where my head was, philosophically.

Morris: It was more liberal?

Spencer: Far more liberal--I may have agreed with some of their goals, but I certainly never agreed with the ways they were going to get there. So that was interesting and I found it exciting, but when it got down to the serious business of making the decision, I felt much more comfortable with the Republicans than I did with the Democrats.

Morris: Because of Eisenhower?

Spencer: Eisenhower was part of it, but basically the philosophies that were involved--the implementation of philosophies--how you were going to get some place. I believe in the free-enterprise system and all those things. I don't believe in big government and most of those people do. That was sort of the difference.

Morris: Was Earl Warren a factor in your decision?

Organizing in East Los Angeles

Spencer: First job I ever worked for was Earl Warren, when I was in college. I got three hundred dollars. Eddie Maldando, Manuel Santana, and myself. A guy by the name of Raymondo Torres, who I think is now dead, wanted an appointment to some commission on the state and somebody must have told him, "You go out and do a job in East L.A. for Earl Warren." Earl was running against Jimmy Roosevelt in the primary, and you could cross-file. He wanted as many votes as he could in the Democratic primary.

Spencer: And so Raymondo came to Eddie Maldando and myself and this other Mexican kid, Manuel Santana, and asked us to put together something on the East side of L.A., which we did. We got a total of six hundred bucks--all of us total. We were all going to East L.A. Junior College at the time.

Morris: Was east L.A., then a strong Mexican area?

Spencer: Oh yes, it was a barrio then.

Morris: And not many people were yet doing much political organizing in that area?

Spencer: It was the initial Mexican-American movement, community service organization, which--

Morris: Was it the CSO?

Spencer: No, it was the fore-runner of that. It was Eddie Roybal's first race that they first got organized in the east side. Then the CSO was an outgrowth of that and then Caesar [Chavez] has taken over the CSO basically--that's sort of the steps.

Morris: At one point, didn't the Quakers, American Friends Service Committee, have an interest or put some money into the Community Service Organization?

Spencer: They could have--I don't remember. I was just with Warren, but I went to school and was raised just over the hill from east L.A.--I knew what was going on. Eddie Roybal--that's when Julian Nava and these other guys that I was talking about--that was Julian's first start and Julian was in college with us. He's the president of the L.A. Board of Education now.

They just broke their pick on a door-to-door organization for Eddie Roybal--that was for the city council. That was really the first that I ever saw and maybe the best today--grassroots Mexican-American political organization--was in Eddie Roybal's first two runs.

Morris: There was an organization called the Mexican-American Political Association?

Spencer: MAPA--still alive. There's several of them in the state--none of them have any political muscle today. There's seventeen of them in the state of Texas that I worked last year.

Spencer: It depends on where you are in the country; The Mexican-American situation is almost like any other political situation in California--when they have a star or a charismatic figure that they can gather around, they work and they get organized. Cesar has been that through a period.

That priest, and I can't remember his name, a priest on the east side of L.A. now, who has a neighborhood association group--that's not the correct name, but it's close. He's coming close to putting something back together. For example, he took on the insurance companies on their insurance rates for automobiles in the east side--they won.

Starting Spencer-Roberts Company on a Shoestring

Spencer: Somewhere in 1958, I was offered a job with the L.A. County Republican Central Committee as their field organizer. My partner for years, Bill Roberts, was the executive director at the same time, and of course, we were very close in the Young Republicans. And I decided that I was going to make the big change and try the political life and that's when I made my first professional move--took the job. But while I was in the job, Bill and I decided that we'd watch Whitaker and Baxter--we'd watch Baus and Ross. Those were about the only two around.

And we assumed those guys made money and we thought that's a much better way to go in politics, because you were independent, plus we were realists and we realized that party apparatus changes over time and the staff comes and goes, so we were selfish in that respect.

Morris: Is that normally the case, that whoever is the chairman of whatever the organization is, brings in his own personnel?

Spencer: Sure, there are people I can point to whose longevity has been great, but they're not really what I call activists or producers. I mean, they don't do anything--it's like a corporation--they don't really do anything or offend anybody, and consequently they can stay forever, but there's still a lot of turnover and that's the way it should be.

So while Bill and I were working for the county committee, we had had a lot of discussions about forming a management firm or a political management firm, such as Baus and Ross or Whitaker-Baxter, and we made an agreement we would do that. The point

Spencer: was when--the timing. That was June in 1960 that we decided was the time, because we could leave the county committee-- they had had a change in chairmen and my old friend Pat Hillings came in as the new chairman, which made it easier for me to talk to Pat.

We were able to leave there with three clients--Al [Alphonzo] Bell, who was the former chairman, who was going to run for that congressional seat which he held for years--his first race; Johnny Rousselot's first race for Congress; and a state assembly race with Tag Manning of the San Gabriel Valley; he was running against an incumbent, Ron Cameron.

So we had three clients.

Morris: Because Hillings interceded for you and said, "These guys have done good work for the committee?"

Spencer: No, it was totally our decision. We knew we were going to leave; it was just when. But because they changed chairmen and we had three potential clients; we didn't have any money, so we had to have something out there when we left. So, we had three clients and a change in leadership of the county committee--it made an opportune time.

So, we put up five hundred dollars each and started our business! [laughing] And never looked back!

Morris: That's pretty neat! In terms of just the great American, "do-your-own-thing" on a shoestring.

Spencer: I think the only commitment we had was a month-to-month lease and we had to sign a contract for the phone company.

Morris: Could I go back a minute and ask, what kinds of things you felt were important that you learned from Whitaker-Baxter and Baus and Ross?

Spencer: Well, I don't think we learned much from them. All they were, were sort of heroes--people that had done something successfully that we would like to do. It would be like a baseball player watching Joe DiMaggio, but never having any contact with him.

My base of political learning came from the Hillings' operation and from a fellow by the name of Bill Price, who was Pat's A.A. and still a very bright politician, but he doesn't practice it any more. He's a lawyer here in Newport Beach. Bernie Brennan, who is now deceased. He was lawyer in L.A., who helped us in our early days. Bob Finch, who was a contemporary.

Spencer: Just about all of us learned in the Nixon operation--as volunteers, if nothing else. Our experience with the Young Republicans--that was hard-nosed political organization in those days. We were out there to win. We weren't involved with philosophies as much as we were into the technique of winning.

I think that the people I learned from were not those two organizations that we were trying to emulate--it was from other people that I was in contact with in the political arena, like Hillings and Price and Bernie and Murray Chotiner and Finch.

Total Campaign Concept

Morris: So that you really learned the trade by doing it with people who were successful.

Spencer: We had learned all of the organizational rudiments of it just by doing it--media aspects and those things were probably our weakest point and that's where we did learn by doing.

Although I believe that politics is an art and not a science--I still believe it today. Bill Roberts and I--we just had a feel for it. A lot of things I can't do in this world, but one thing I have all the confidence in that I can do, is politics.

Morris: It sounds like when you started out, your experience was largely the grassroots organizing, "get the people involved"--get more volunteers to work in whatever connection. Has that continued to be the basis upon which you work?

Spencer: I believe in broad-based campaigns where all aspects are involved. I see too many candidates today that are strictly media campaigns. There's a lot of people in the business today that are political PR firms, that are media firms really.

They didn't come up through the ranks, they don't understand media. I think that's a weakness. It was a weakness in the Ken Maddy campaign last year--good media campaign, limited organizational campaign. So when I approach a campaign today, whether it be as the full-time manager or whether it be as the consultant that reviews everything, I talk about a total campaign--all of these ramifications have to be put in there. But we started on the organizational end; a lot of people started on the media end and they worked toward different directions.

Morris: How did you and Bill Roberts divide up the responsibilities?

Spencer: Well, we named the company by flipping a coin. We decided who had the best office by flipping a coin. Bill usually lost too. [laughing]

Morris: Are you a lucky poker player?

Spencer: I'm lucky, yes. We would, with a few exceptions, which I'll talk about, sit down and analyze the candidates' campaign in the region and in the personal relationships that we would have with the clients--just Bill and I. For example, Al Bell was a natural for Bill, because he was closer to Al than I was.

Johnny Roussetot and I were very close, so that was the natural division. And time availability was another factor. But we would just sit down and talk about, very candidly, who we felt would do the best job, because Bill and I had different talents to a degree.

Bill is very good at taking an established candidate, a front runner, and holding the lead--I won't say I'm not good at it, I can do it, but I don't enjoy it that much. I'm better at taking somebody that's behind and blitzing the thing and winning it. Otherwise, I take more chances than Bill normally takes. So that would enter--we were very aware of that difference between ourselves. What the political circumstances were had a lot to do with how we made our decisions and the personalities of it.

So, the Rockefeller campaign, the Reagan campaign of '66, we worked together on to a great degree, although Bill was the lead in the '66 campaign for Reagan. In the Rockefeller campaign, we just took all of the duties and divided them up. Like the press operation, the fund-raising operation, the organization and the media--he'd take half of them and I'd take half of them. But you have to remember, our offices, in those days, were in the same room and we faced each other and we knew what was going on all the time; easy communications.

But no matter who was the lead on the campaign, we would always spend time talking to the other person about problems and open the input. It was almost an outside, objective point of view that you were getting. I mean they weren't involved and they'd see you do something or I'd see Bill do something and I'd say, "What the hell you doing that for?" We'd discuss it.

That kind of relationship is just like a marriage--you've got to get along and we did. We worked very closely and we had great years--a lot of fun.

Internal Party Differences; John Birch Society

Morris: Mr. Bell and Mr. Rousselot are generally considered to be the more conservative of the Republican party--

Spencer: Bell isn't, Rousselot is--Bell ended up being the moderate end of the Republican party.

Morris: Were there any problems with working with Mr. Rousselot when the John Birch Society came along?

Spencer: John was, back in the YR days--he was one of my first allies in politics and the Birch thing did not become an issue until March of 1961, which was after he was elected. And I did not remember the Birch Society in the '60 election--didn't even know what the Birch Society was. I had heard about it, but I thought it was some communist-front organization. I didn't even realize what it was! So, I didn't know about it till after the election--one night we were having a discussion, flying back to Washington with him; he talked about it.

There was a great discussion that ensued in the spring of 1961 about the Birch Society between myself and some of John's close friends and we recommended that he get out of it and he didn't. Then he served in Congress and he ran for re-election and we did not run his campaign for re-election. He lost in a very close race. Then he went out and did his own thing for awhile and then came back and ran in 197--, something like that. John had been a close personal friend all those years, but I haven't done anything politically with him till if he runs here for the United States Senate--I'll probably do something.

Morris: But during the next couple years, '62 to '64, and on for a ways, our records indicate that the John Birch Society caused quite a lot of division within the Republican party.

Spencer: It became an issue in '66; in 1964 to a degree. In 1966, it was the first problem that Reagan had to face, not because it was the Birch Society, but because he was a total unknown, politically and where was he coming from. His enemies tried to tie him to the extreme-right wing and the Birch people and things of that nature, so he had to face up to that issue.

We have a two-party system basically--

Norris: The Democrats and the Republicans--

Spencer: That doesn't leave a lot of room for people who have differences of opinions on given issues and things like that. I think it phenomenal that we keep the two-party system and it doesn't splinter more than it does. As we know, there have been attempts to splinter it--the IPP [International Progressive party] was one, the American Conservative party has been another. Both parties have had liberal-conservative splits, for lack of a better term, all these years that I've been around. Some parties are larger in certain periods of history than others.

In the early '60s, it was largely within the Republican party. The unity was better in the Democratic party. Today, the Democrats have a bigger problem in that split than the Republicans have--I mean it is their turn!

So the differences are present in both parties and they just seem to get bigger at certain times than others.

Cal Plan: Increasing Republican Representation in Sacramento

Morris: When you and Mr. Roberts were first partners, there was something called the Cal Plan that you were involved in--How did that come about?

Spencer: Cal Plan was originated in 1964, by Gaylord Parkinson, he was the newly-elected chairman or vice-chairman--

Morris: He was vice-chairman for Caspar Weinberger from '62 to '64 and then became chairman.

Spencer: So he became chairman in '64. It was initiated by Parkinson when he was chairman. It was a conceptual thing that we had worked out with Parky when he was vice-chairman, and that was that if the Republicans were going to get control of the state legislature, they had to approach it differently. The approach had to be a target-district program, where we did all the research and all the necessary things to determine what Democratic incumbents might be vulnerable, go out and find good candidates, put a good management team in, and see if sufficient funds were there to run a good campaign. That was sort of the guts of the Cal Plan.

Instead of taking a pot of a half a million dollars and spreading it out evenly over all the legislative races in the state, we just ignored those that we felt couldn't win. It was a tough call for the chairman because, historically, everybody

Spencer: thinks they have a chance. But we were making hard political decisions, that so-and-so cannot win or we cannot defeat this incumbent, but we can or we have an opportunity in this district so that's where we're going to put our resources.

So '64 was a bad year to try it because of the Goldwater debacle. We did win Newt Russell's seat in light of the Johnson tidal wave. So that proved our point. That program was in operation in '64, '66, '68, and then someone else took it over in '70, I think.

Morris: Another campaign firm?

Spencer: No, the state committee started doing it by themselves. The program, through all these changes in leadership, still used the term Cal Plan--they have a Cal Plan committee today, but it, in some ways, has been diluted and changed and lost its vigor.

Morris: Is that true of many good ideas?

Spencer: It's true of most of them! [laughing]

Morris: Who besides you two and Dr. Parkinson, worked out this idea?

Spencer: Bob Walker was involved--he was working for Parkinson then.

Morris: How about Caspar Weinberger? Was he interested in it initially?

Spencer: Yes.

Morris: Well, you said that you worked it out with Parkinson, while he was vice-chairman--and while he was vice-chairman, Weinberger was chairman.

Spencer: We didn't implement it until afterwards. I really don't know what discussions were held between Parky and Cap on that. We worked with Parky.

Morris: It sounds like a scientific approach to political organization.

Spencer: It was. It was as scientific as you could get. It's just the idea of taking all your resources and putting them where you have a chance of winning. I don't know how involved Cappy was in this process--how much Parky discussed it with him--

Morris: How did the people who were putting up most of the money feel about the Cal Plan?

Spencer: They liked it. It was very acceptable to them and it became very acceptable to them after we had a few successes, then they really liked it.

Today, they are trying to re-implement it and they did in 1976 with the business community--the PAC's--things organized differently. They did it again this year through a little different organization.

They developed two separate PAC's--one was the assembly PAC, and one was the senate PAC and then the three groups, those two, plus the state committee, worked together. In the old days it was all under the state committee apparatus. And for various political reasons, it splintered out to this today. Most of them evolve around leadership and confidence levels and things of that nature.

Morris: So the individuals who are on the state central committee have an important part in how these things develop?

Spencer: Yes, they have a Cal Plan Committee still, which reviews all the targeted districts.

Women and Upward Mobility in Politics

Morris: You mentioned Emily Pike as somebody that you worked with while you were getting started in this. How important have women been in politics?

Spencer: Very important. I mean, it's one of the few professional fields that women, if they've got it, they haven't had a problem. I can cite pre-Emily days. You've got to start with Leone Baxter and that organization and then you had Liz Snyder down here. You had Beatrice Kay; you had Eleanor Chambers who was Sam Yorty's gal--all the years that Sam ran for legislature, Congress, mayor. Ellie's dead now. Ellie was a brilliant politician. She ran the Yorty races. Liz Snyder ran all the early Younger races. Glen Lipscomb and all those kinds of people.

Bea Kay had an organization. There's a gal who still polls in the L.A. market--she was a prominent pollster in those days. What's her name? Joe Scott quotes her every now and then, lately I noticed.

Right there in the state of California, there were four or five people that were political managers that were women; all through the fifties and the sixties.

Morris: Have you ever run a woman's campaign?

Spencer: Have I? I don't think so--I don't recall it.

Morris: Well, there are not all that many women, certainly not in the sixties.

Spencer: No, the seventies has been the era of women in politics. Last year there were some sixty-six, sixty-seven women elected around the country--sixty-six of them were Republicans.

That's close to the number--the national committee has it.

Morris: Can you hazard a thought as to why women do better as Republican candidates.

Spencer: No, I can't. I can hazard a thought as to why women are doing better. Women are, nationally, upwardly-mobile people now--and upwardly-mobile people are usually good candidates, all other things being equal. The blacks were very upwardly-mobile in the sixties and did very well. The Mexican-Americans are trying to put their act together, but not as successful. But women are just upwardly-mobile and they consequently make candidates.

When you're talking about legislative races, on the Republican side, it's hard to get the young business executive--self-entrepreneur type, involved in that process, where they go to Sacramento and they make \$24,000 a year and they're just doing better than that.

Morris: So somebody who's got it made is not likely to chose politics.

Spencer: Right. But a woman who is upwardly-mobile--that's a shot. And it's easier to convince some of them to run as Republicans than it is these other people. I think that's one of the reasons that you see more women running and more women winning. I think you're going to see a lot more of them.

II THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PROFESSIONAL
CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT
##

Refining Research Techniques

Morris: For the Cal Plan--you were doing what kind of research?

Spencer: Well, we did what is known as survey research polls today, but we also developed systems and methods of what we call precinct index priorities. Otherwise, we'd take three hundred precincts in the district and prioritize them, based on generalities such as past voting records, socioeconomic factors, housing costs, salary--census data information. And try to build a profile of what that district was really like. Then looking at our candidate and looking at the issues, and looking at the incumbent and maybe at his voting records say, "We can list these precincts one, two, three hundred in a priority order." And we did a lot of that, and we sort of introduced that system--they do it all over now--that kind of research.

Morris: Did you do that yourself or did you have somebody else do that?

Spencer: Well, we had a young man working with us from '64 on named Vince Barraba. He ended up eventually directing the Census Bureau of the United States. We started a company called Datamatics with him, which later was merged with another and is now known as Decision-Making Information and is one of the biggest polling companies in the United States, which I have no interest in anymore, or Roberts.

But we used Barraba and then the new company Datamatics to basically formalize this and its spread across the country. We did a lot of work with the congressional campaign committees and those people on it. So we didn't go outside of our own organization then.

Morris: How about issue research? Is that a different kind of a thing?

Spencer: There's two kinds--the survey-research issue, which is different. That's what people call polling--they think of numbers in polling about where a candidate is, but what you really get out of it is the research, which is all those books you see in front of you there.

The other research is about an incumbent's voting record, what have they done while in office, how have they voted, what issues have they introduced. It's a combination of those two things that you put together, which helps you define your campaign plan. I think that all campaigns have to have a plan and all campaigns should have a written plan. That doesn't mean that you don't deviate from it, but you need all the information you can get to make a good campaign plan.

The other thing that we did was a "thought leader" research on incumbents. A thought leader is a newspaper editor or publisher, a banker--Let's take Berkeley. In Berkeley you have people that are thought leaders and community leaders, that are the movers and shakers of Berkeley. If you and I spend an hour together, we could probably list twenty-five of them and come to an agreement that these twenty-five people have the most influence in Berkeley.

What we did in the early days of the Cal Plan, is we would go out and send somebody out to interview those twenty-five people, with a prepared questionnaire. The end goal was to find, in their judgement, whether they thought that incumbent was weak or not weak. [pause] Those are the different techniques, research-wise. We introduced precinct-index priority, and we introduced thought-leader research.

Any good politician, probably since Abraham Lincoln's day, has done thought-leader research, but we kind of formalized it. We had a written program of how to do it.

Morris: That's interesting, because I remember Leone Baxter commenting at one point that people didn't pay attention to thought leaders anymore. Have you found that's not the case?

Spencer: Leone, I think, is right in terms of the general public, but all we were trying to do was to determine a vulnerability. I still think today, that they're a good source, because they pay attention to what's going on in their community.

Morris: So you were looking for the vulnerability of incumbents, when you were running campaigns for people who were challengers. Very ingenious.

Spencer: Right. Right.

Growth of Campaign-Management Firms

Morris: Did you work on Mr. Nixon's '62 campaign here?

Spencer: Nope. I've never worked on a Nixon campaign as a professional, except in the '68 general election; he asked us, after the convention, to sort of staff his fund-raising effort in southern California and we put Dick Woodward in there, who was with us then, and he worked with them. That's the only professional involvement that we've had with Nixon.

Morris: Dick Woodward is--?

Spencer: Of San Francisco--Woodward-McDowell now.

Morris: Did he start out as part of your southern California organization?

Spencer: We had a northern California office which we started in '64, headed by Fred Haffner, and he had hired Dick to work with him. Fred got out of the business and Dick continued to run our office for us. And then we decided that we didn't want an office.

We had brought McDowell in the 1970 Reagan race. Then he and Jack opened an office and we had a working relationship with them. That has been dissolved since--now it's just Woodward and McDowell.

Morris: But do you still use them as what they call correspondent banks?

Spencer: We could. We've changed--Roberts got out of Spencer-Roberts in 1974 of January; he decided that he didn't want to do it anymore, so I bought him out--took the company over and I have basically retrenched the company since those days. It's me and a couple of people now--we've had as many as sixteen, seventeen employees. I like it better this way. So, I don't do as much full management as I used to; I do more consultant work all over the United States and I don't do as much work in California as I used to do--I do more work out of state than I do in California.

Morris: Is that a reflection of what you sometimes hear: California is a kind of a pace-setter--the rest of the country looks at California in terms of issue development and campaigns?

Spencer: California has been a pace-setter in terms of development of political management types and firms. Why I work around the country I think is more a matter of reputation and background.

I'm not very old, but I'm one of the oldest hands in the business now. Most of the people that are in the business have worked for me some place along the line. All my competitors are former employees [laughing] on the Republican side, but even on the Democratic side. There are probably more of them in California than other parts of the country--although it is a phenomenon of the late '60s and early '70s that there are so many. When I started I could name you two, which I did earlier. Today, they have a professional association of managers. There are some three hundred members of that association and that doesn't include all of them.

Morris: Is that a reflection of the entrepreneurial instinct or is it that political campaigns have become more complex?

Spencer: It's because they've become more complex and it's because people like Whitaker and Baxter and Spencer-Roberts had some great successes. And we maybe have oversold the concept to the political world that you're crazy to run for public office unless you have a professional management team.

I think there's a great need for them, but I think I'm very responsible for overselling it myself.

Morris: How much have you relied on the volunteering organizations? You came out of YR yourself, as did half a dozen other Republicans.

Spencer: A very important ingredient of any campaign--troops. You've got to have rapport with them; you have to understand what motivates them; and you have to understand who the leadership is, the state party organizations, women's federated groups, Young Republicans--they go up and down in terms of their effectiveness, depending upon their leadership.

But we went through an era from about '66 to '76 where media was probably more dominant. You see, I think it takes about four things to run a campaign--it takes a candidate, it takes an organization, it takes issues, it takes money--those four things have never gone away. It's how those things are blended and mixed that make a successful campaign. Sometimes money is more important, sometimes the candidate is more important--in my lifetime I've never seen it change. Sometimes the organization could be; it's never been not important, but sometimes it's a greater degree of importance.

Spencer: But in the statewide races, media is always going to be predominant from here on out, although that doesn't mean that organization isn't important. You get down to some of these areas like Orange County, where you don't have a media market--you have the L.A. media market, and they treat it on a ten-percent basis (ten-percent of the news coverage)-- or you can't afford to buy the media market, because you're buying the whole L.A. area. Well, you get down to those types of regions, and there are a lot of them in the country--they're the suburban areas--I think you're going to see a rebirth of the emphasis upon volunteer organizations to get the message out, because of the cost factor and the inflationary spiral of media, the cost factor of postal services today. Direct mail, which was always our answer to getting people--that's getting very, very expensive. So I think the smart managers are going to get back to say, "How can we put the troops together and deliver the message, vis-a-vis printed material and that sort of thing."

I think you can see a rebirth of organizations in those kinds of regions.

Finance: Special Interest Syndrome

Morris: On financing, I've had a couple of people tell me wistfully, that they feel that the Republicans are better fund-raisers, and Republican organizations produce more money with less anguish--in other words, the big-givers give more and more consistently--Has that been your experience?

Spencer: It depends on where you're talking about, in the country--California?

Morris: California.

Spencer: I don't think it's true at all since Pat Brown's success. Prior to that I think they, the Republican party, owned the money in the state. Once Pat Brown became governor, the whole thing changed around. The federal laws are favorable to unions to giving to campaigns and they're not favorable to business giving to campaigns in equity.

We have just as many wealthy Democrats in the state of California giving as we do wealthy Republicans giving. I could give you the lists, Lew Wasserman and the whole thing.

What has happened in politics is we have developed a special-interest syndrome in politics. As a politician, I call them coalitions--if I want to win I need a coalition of over fifty percent,

Spencer: and that means I have gun control people, I have Catholics, I have ERA pro or cons, I have abortions--I can go right down a list. [Raps table for emphasis] These are single-issue causes that are beginning to permeate our society and around those causes, people are raising lots of dollars, and it crosses party lines.

Where does the candidate stand on abortion? That's going to dictate where that money goes and that endorsement goes. So that and PAC groups today, which are political action committees, which businessmen are busting their tails to put these things together. Remind me, let's talk about PACs because I think you're going to see, in the next few years, some changes in 'em.

But I don't think, since the Democrats got in power, which was with Pat Brown in 1958--It's been a very even ball-game since then--it's a contest every four years and every two years in this state. The Democrats have just as much ability to raise money as the Republicans.

Jerry Brown raised millions of dollars more than Evelle Younger. Jerry Brown raised more money than Hugh Flounoy in 1974, because I was involved in that race. Ronald Reagan raised a lot more money than Jesse Unruh did in 1970. I don't know what Pat Brown raised in '66, but I bet it was dead even between Reagan and Brown.* I bet it was a standoff, in terms of dollars raised.

In the late sixties, the Republican money establishment was unified and it was unified around Ronald Reagan. There was very little division and they really went to the mat. They have spent a lot of money on Ronald Reagan since 1965, and still are. I don't buy that premise--Democrats have a real base within the unions for raising money--union funds--Republicans have it within the business community. Whoever's in power usually gets a bigger share of the money because they're in power.

Jesse Unruh could raise money when he was speaker--I was up against Jess all the time in campaigns--Jess could raise money.

Morris: But he was an elected official himself.

Spencer: But he was the titular head of the whole political apparatus within the Democratic party--special elections--Who was I running campaigns against? Jesse or Tom Bane or one of his lieutenants.

*Reagan reported expenditures of \$544,199 in the 1966 primary and over \$2.6 million in November. Brown reported \$561,876 expenditures in the primary and over \$2.0 million in the general election. Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, "The 1966 Election in California," Western Political Quarterly, volume 20, 553.

Spencer: Jesse was running a campaign against us in the Chet Wolfram race in '59. Jess was running the campaign, or if it wasn't him he got Ken Cory in there or one of his young lieutenants or Tom Bane. It was always Jesse who was the key guy that we were running against.

Morris: Was he doing the same kind of precinct, district priorities?

Spencer: Well, they started to--we were ahead of them, but they caught up and they started doing what we were doing and using some of our techniques. See, they always had numbers going for him. There are always more Democrats in the registration so we had to be more creative.

The premise being that if you were a Democrat, and just about most of those districts were, and you delivered your vote and held it, you're going to win the race, so they didn't have to be as creative. Well, we started winning them and beating them in these races and so they started looking at what we were doing and they started doing what we were doing.

Morris: Was Jesse's operation separate from the Democratic State Central Committee?

Spencer: I don't know enough about the internal operations over there, but it was basically in the auspices of what you'd call the Democrat caucus in Sacramento. How close Jesse worked with the state committee, I don't know.

Cross-filing and Voter Registration: Wooing the Uninvolved

Morris: The outsiders' view is that it was your point about the person with the strongest personality and strong leadership that won.

Spencer: I would say that the biggest resource that the Democrats had in the '60s was the labor movement in the state, not the Democratic party apparatus.

Morris: Going back to Goodwin Knight--there's quite a lot of evidence that he had a lot of labor support. Were you aware of that at all?

Spencer: But that's pre-Pat Brown--

Morris: That's pre-Pat Brown and Pat pulled the labor support back together.

Spencer: Cross-filing, it's probably the biggest single thing that happened in the fifties. That really helped the Democratic party.

Morris: When cross-filing ended in '58, did that make a difference to your kind of campaign?

Spencer: Well, we weren't really professionally involved then, but I can tell you, that makes a big difference. That was a big breakthrough for the Democrats. To get rid of cross-filing helped the Democrats. It was a matter of forcing the Republican or Democrat name on the ballot there. See, in cross-filing Earl Warren ran and it said Earl Warren--it didn't say Republican. [laughing]

Morris: And labor was more likely to stick with the label and his own party?

Spencer: The general public does. That bottom thirty percent that really isn't conversant with what's going on, but, "I'm a Democrat--"

In those days, southern California, when you analyze the data of where those people came from, a lot of them came from the south. Their daddy was a Democrat, their grand-daddy was a Democrat. But their thinking processes, and this is why we used to win, were much closer to the Republican party philosophy in the state of California than they were the CDC, the California Democratic Council. [Raps table for emphasis] So, they were out here for a couple of years and they'd see Alan Cranston say all these crazy things and Jesse--my good friend--and some of these other people, "I'm a Democrat, but that's not me!"--So we were able to get to them.

Morris: Did you do any work on voter registration and try to get people to re-register?

Spencer: We've always been a great believer in voter registration, period. Just getting them out there that are yours and just aren't registered--there are just thousands of them out there that aren't registered--they're in both parties. Really gearing in on that and, yes, educational programs to try to get people to change.

Morris: So that what you actually set up was kind of a year-round--?

Spencer: That was the role of the party--we would work with the party to do that. Now if you were going into an election year, you could start well ahead of time and in that district work with the party people and say, "Your job is to get the registration "differential" up four points, and we'd help them any way we could.

But, no, registration is a continuing process. Both parties through their legislative representatives, are always horsing around trying to set up the process in the way that is the most favorable to them. Such as post-card registration, today, is not favorable to Republicans. [laughing]

Managing Rockefeller's 1964 California Presidential Primary Campaign

Morris: How did you come to be the campaign firm for Mr. Rockefeller in '64?

Spencer: Well, we had run Tommy Kuchel's campaign in '62, which was our first major campaign. George Hinman, who was Rockefeller's number one emissary, came to see us in California in '63, latter part of '63. I assume, and I don't know the facts of this--check this out with a lot of people--I know that they talked to Tommy Kuchel as Senator, and I'm sure that Kuchel was instrumental in the decision-making. He couldn't have said anything bad about us, or we wouldn't have got the job, I'll put it that way.

We'd had some luck with special elections, we'd had the Kuchel thing. I don't know who George Hinman talked to, but we had a lot of discussions, and then about December of that year, Bill and I flew to New York and we consummated a deal for the primary and we went to work.

Morris: Just on the California campaign?

Spencer: Just on the California campaign, that's correct--the California primary '64. It was a great experience.

We didn't see the first poll until after we had taken over--we got it in January, and it was about 58 to 27 in favor of Goldwater. We wondered if we hadn't made a mistake. [laughing]

Morris: Why did you agree to do the campaign?

Spencer: Well, it was the only game in town. Later, I became very close to Nelson, and very fond of him, but I really didn't know the man--he was a governor of New York. He was from the moderate side of the party. And nobody else asked us.

Morris: That's the important issue!

Spencer: I don't recall the Goldwater people ever asking us. So we went to work on it and it was a great experience and I think it was one of the best races we ever ran, considering where we came from. I feel we had it won the Friday before the election, but then Nelson Junior was born.

Morris: You do think the baby was decisive.

Spencer: I'm absolutely convinced that the baby was decisive, because the campaign against Nelson Rockefeller was not a philosophical campaign. There were some problems in the party naturally.

Spencer: The campaign was against him--his personal life--his remarriage, the child, all those sort of things. We addressed that problem by saying, "All we can do is confuse the issue. If we can get the thing totally confused, then they forget about it." So we did that by trying to question the philosophy of Barry Goldwater. "He may in fact be an extremist--let's discuss the issues."

If you go back and look at the media and the mailings and the press involved in the '64 campaign, you'll see that that's what we were doing. And we were successful at it, although Nelson was a great personal campaigner, and we got a lot of hay out of that. He had star quality so to speak.

We didn't have any troops. We had all the money in the world. We had a little over two million dollars, which was a lot of money in those days. We re-registered about fifty thousand black people in L.A. county, which was a coup. To vote in the primary, because Nelson had just great rapport with black people, based on the family's total life-long support of all the Negro colleges in the south. Black people, middle income and college-educated black people were just coming out from under rocks. We didn't know where they were coming from.

Morris: To volunteer to work?

Spencer: Yes, and they were Democrats. So we set up an organized process. The only way you can be helpful to us is you've got to change your registration, because you've got to vote in the Republican primary. So we had an organized program.

Morris: Who did you have running the registration part?

Spencer: Don Taylor, who's now dead.

Morris: Was he black by any chance?

Spencer: Yes. He was a young man that died of cancer at a very young age. Louis Johnson was involved, who's with Security Pacific Bank or a savings and loan now. He was sort of the treasurer that kept track of the money for us. He's still around, I think he's an officer in the state committee. And we had lots of street people that aren't involved in politics anymore.

Morris: Is that frequent that people come in and out of politics?

Spencer: Yes.

Morris: You said you had two million dollars. Did most of that come from Rockefeller sources?

Spencer: All but about a hundred thousand.

Morris: So there really wasn't a broad base of financial support?

Spencer: Leonard Firestone was our chairman, and Leonard gave and Justin Dart gave. Leonard said it was the toughest job in the world to go out and ask for money for Nelson Rockefeller. He said they all laughed at him. [laughing]

Morris: There was too much name-recognition.

Spencer: Too much perception, yes, of the money with the name. But all our money came from New York.

[pause]

Morris: What about the campaign organization for other primaries in other states. Was there any kind of coordination?

Spencer: We worked a little with Monty Montgomery and the people in Oregon, which was the primary two weeks before us, communications-wise. The Oregon primary impacts in the California primary.

We went to meetings in the east with Mort Frane and people that were working in other parts of the country, but we had no direct involvement in the campaigns, no, out of state.

Morris: Did Rockefeller have somebody on his immediate staff who was staying in touch?

Spencer: George Hinman was the man, who's still alive in New York. He was the national committeeman from the state of New York, George was his political emissary in all cases. If they hired somebody in California, George did it. If it was in Washington, Oregon, Illinois, George was the key liaison man on everything.

Morris: Had he worked with Rockefeller on other things?

Spencer: Yes, he's been a close ally. Jack Wells was another one, a lawyer. They're both lawyers in New York. Wells came out of the Dewey machine.

Yes, Hinman did a lot of legal work for the Rockefellers, and he was a very close ally for years. Clear back to the first time he was elected governor of New York, which must have been '58--somewhere around there.

Morris: Was Hinman important at all in how the decision-makers in the California Republican party saw Rockefeller?

Spencer: Instrumental. One of our first goals was to put together an executive committee that was really top class. George was one of the best salesmen I ever saw. I mean he'd sit one on one and come out weeks at a time--we'd bring the people to him and he'd sell them.

Morris: You selected the people?

Spencer: Yes, although we decided who we would want to get and then George would go after them on behalf of Nelson Rockefeller.

Morris: And did you get everybody that you wanted?

Spencer: Not everybody, but he sure batted well. It was a very good committee, considering the climate.

Goldwater and Reagan in the 1964 Campaigns

Spencer: Goldwater owned the party apparatus in the state. He owned the volunteer organization in the state. He had every one of them in 1964.

Morris: How was he able to do that?

Spencer: He became a hero--a lot of it was philosophy. Once Nixon lost in '60, there was an upheaval in the Republican party. Nixon, kind of kept a lid on a lot of people. Nixon is exposed to the national scene--he is a conservative and was a conservative--there's no doubt about that in my mind. But he was a pragmatist, and he saw all the different way things cut in the United States, philosophically.

So, if you recall in 1960, I think Barry Goldwater's name was put in nomination at the convention, or it was talked of. And he got up and gave a fiery speech and went for Nixon, but said a lot of philosophical things about the growth of government and communism and these things, which really hit a chord with these people. They were Taft-type people.

Morris: Yes, this is nationally.

Spencer: Nationally, but it all related to this state. So, Nixon was defeated and the Goldwater movement took off. The Goldwater movement started involving a lot of new people--a lot of new people. People that are still around today got started in the Goldwater movement.

Spencer: Goldwater had been in and out of this state, probably more than he had in Arizona, giving speeches for the party, for fund-raisers, etc., and Goldwater was saying the things that were on the Republicans' minds, in the early 1960s. He became the hero of that group--the whole party apparatus, and that's why he owned it.

Morris: So he spent a good period of time before he decided to run for president in which he was doing good works for the Republican party.

Spencer: Barry Goldwater probably gave more speeches across the nation in those days for candidates and other people than anybody.

Morris: That's the same thing that Reagan was doing a couple of years later?

Spencer: He gave a speech for Nixon in '60. He gave quite a few speeches for Goldwater in '64 around the country. And a great fund-raising speech that raised a lot of money on television, which kind of made him a darling of that group. I don't know when Ron decided to run. He came to us in May of 1965 and talked to us about running for governor and if we'd get involved.

At that time and place, he said he was not committed to run. He wanted to go out and find out. I personally think that Ron was committed, emotionally, to running for governor in 1965, but wanted an escape hatch.

III RONALD REAGAN'S 1966 CAMPAIGN FOR GOVERNOR
##

Early Backers; Questions; George Christopher's Candidacy

Morris: Who were some of his people who came and talked to you about what you thought Ronald Reagan's chances were and would you take it on?

Spencer: Cy Rubel, Henry Salvatori, Holmes Tuttle, Ed Mills--I hope I didn't leave anybody out, but those people were a little committee. They had a discussion with us, and his brother Neil Reagan and a fellow by the name of Townsend who I think was an emissary of Salvatori, and asked if we were interested, and we said, "Yea!"

We talked. Then we had three or four conversations with Ronald Reagan and I guess they had made their minds up that they wanted us. An interesting part was that Christopher people were talking to us at the same time.

Morris: Right, that's something that's definitely fascinating.

Spencer: But, anyway, I remember Ron called us from Scottsdale or Phoenix and was over there with his in-laws, and said, "Well, are you going to run the campaign or not?" one day after two discussions, I said, "I don't even know you and we're going to have to have some more talks." So we went out to his house, with he and his wife Nancy, and had some very in-depth discussions. We were very interested in where he was philosophically--what kind of a person he was.

He satisfied our questions in our minds.

Morris: What were your questions?

Spencer: We just wanted to know what he believed about certain things--economics, and how he'd run the state, and why he thought he ought to be governor, and what made him think he could be governor, the Birch thing, and a whole bunch of other questions.

Morris: How did he stack up in relation to Goldwater and Rockefeller?

Spencer: Well, he and Rockefeller--I've always maintained that there's not that much difference between the two of them--it's how they said it and how they implement it.

In his '66 campaign, he said everything Barry Goldwater said, but he said it better--not as harsh. Reagan said the same thing as Goldwater did in '64 for which Goldwater got crucified and Reagan won on it. They said the same things basically, but Reagan said them very nice and pleasant, not harsh.

Morris: What about Reagan and Rockefeller?

Spencer: They weren't that far apart on goals. They had some differences on how they were going to get to those goals, but they both believed in the private sector, they wanted more private involvement in the government processes and all of those things. Rockefeller had more of an outreach on minority problems than Reagan had; although Reagan had concern for them, he didn't have the depth of feeling that Nelson had. I think that the difference in the states and the operations, and the backgrounds and all of those sort of things.

Morris: How about Rockefeller and Goldwater?

Spencer: I think that the difference between those two men was one of temperament. Barry Goldwater tended to be impulsive and didn't have the depth that Nelson had. Nelson had as much depth as any politician I've ever known in terms of: if he didn't know the answers or why things happened to work, he'd get somebody to find out for him and he'd get the best.

Nelson was an expert at bringing very bright people around him and picking their brains, which is his strength. These other gentlemen tend to oversimplify answers and that sort of thing.

Barry Goldwater has made a great contribution to the country, but I don't feel he has the depth, even that Reagan has.

Morris: So what kinds of things was Christopher representing and did you give him any serious thought?

Spencer: We thought about it at great length. I think, number one, the party needed some new faces and Ronald Reagan was one; that Ronald Reagan could win easier than George Christopher. We were one of the first people that thought that. Most people thought just the reverse. In Ron Metho's criterion, the new face was the real criterion--something that we could rally around for a change.

Reconciling Internal Differences; Recruiting New Workers

Spencer: The big wrenching thing that we had to go through was the fact that here we were walking away, to a degree, from what you might call our allies. Otherwise, we'd run a Kuchel campaign, then we'd run a Rockefeller campaign, and there was a whole ilk of people out there that were for George Christopher--we got a lot of nasty mail. We also got a lot of nasty mail from some other people when we took the Rockefeller campaign.

Morris: Were you aware of Christopher's difficulty about his dairy?

Spencer: Yes.

Morris: How important was that?

Spencer: Yes, that wasn't very important in our decision, because we definitely felt that Reagan was a new face, that Reagan could beat Pat Brown if it was done right, that the party would coalesce around him and we didn't feel that George Christopher could bring those things about. He was not a new face, he didn't have the base in northern California that Ron could have in southern California, he didn't have the financial support that Ron would have. It's like time had passed George by, was our final decision.

Morris: How about the relative importance of northern and southern California in running a statewide campaign?

Spencer: It was a factor. Ron had the southern California base, and it's become increasingly more important through the years.

The Republican party had more strength in the south in those days than it had in the north. It's increased considerably in the north; the San Jose region has become very Republican. I think Ford carried it for example, in 1976.

Reagan carried San Francisco, I think, in 1966. It was not a hard decision. The hardest part for us was we were saying to a lot of our friends that we were going with another element of the party that year, for reasons that we really couldn't discuss.

Spencer: The irony of it is that they all came around; it was the most cohesive situation after the primary I've seen in the state. It was done for two reasons--number one, is when you beat somebody badly, the other side decides, well, I better get on the bandwagon; secondly, we knew that there could be a problem and we spent a lot of time wooing them.

Every county chairman Reagan invited the night of the election--the county chairman of Christopher's board, right on down the line. In other words, we were right out there in front asking Christopher people to join the Reagan campaign.

Morris: That's a very diplomatic kind of approach.

Spencer: Well, you know, people's feelings are hurt and you've got to throw the olive branch out there. We did the same thing with Ford and Reagan in 1976 and we used Mike Curb. We got all 58 Reagan county chairman aboard within three weeks, and, boy, that helped.

Morris: And Mike Curb was the emissary?

Spencer: Because he was a Reagan man--he had organized these people. And I flew out here and I met with Mike Curb immediately after the convention and we started putting it together. We used the same technique then and it paid off, because Ford carried the state by sixty thousand votes or so.

Morris: Not very much. In '66 did you also go out and look for new people to be the county chairmen for Reagan?

Spencer: Yes, we did. Reagan attracted a lot of new people to the party in 1966.

Morris: What kind of folk?

Spencer: Young, suburban, middle-income types, small businessmen--

Morris: How do you go about looking for them?

Spencer: It's a word of mouth thing. We worked off his schedule. He had an extensive schedule in 1965 where he hit everything in the state--every region. And we would have pledge cards, sign-up cards and sign-in cards for all the people who would show up at those things. A lot of new people would show up at those things.

You've got to remember, Ronald Reagan had charisma in those days. Another reason that we decided to go with him is that he was a master of the electronic media. He is the first master of the electronic media the state of California ever had and has had to date. It's his medium, he understands it, he knows how to use it and he's good at it.

Spencer: But we went around the state--he'd speak to fifty people, he'd speak to two hundred people, and he'd give his old number one speech. We'd recruit from those sources.

Developing the Citizen Politician Image;
Emergence of Campus Unrest Issue

Spencer: He had won the primaries by the time filing had closed, in my judgement. Everything he did in 1965 is what won the primary for him. It's not what we did in the campaign.

Morris: That was based on personal contact?

Spencer: And some media--each time we'd go into Fresno, he'd be on television, he'd be on the radio, he'd be in print; so it was a combination just like the campaign tour. He had really not announced yet, but he was building his base.

He had no name ID problem--it was: what is he? Is he an actor or is he a politician; or is he a leader?

Morris: Yes, the transfer from the G.E. Theater to the governor of California--

Spencer: So all he had to do was prove that he had a fair set of brains, and knew a little bit about government; of course citizen politician was our creed--

Morris: Where did you develop that?

Spencer: Well, it came somewhere out of our long brainstorming sessions. It was a strength and so we wanted to deal with his strengths. We felt it was a strength to have somebody that had been out of the system to be running for this high office. We felt that that's what people wanted for a change--somebody that wasn't a bureaucrat or in the present system, so to speak.

That applied to Christopher as well as Brown in the general election, because George had been an officeholder and had run before and that sort of thing.

Morris: Did you do the contact work to recoup the county chairmen yourself?

Spencer: Bill or myself--we built a massive organization of people. We put a good organization together--it was one of the best they ever had in the state in '66. But I think how he handled the

Spencer: media and how he handled the extremism question, was probably the biggest contributions we made. Keeping him from making mistakes is another way of saying it.

He was green, and he had some supporters who wanted to go out and do some things that Goldwater did.

Morris: Such as?

Spencer: Overstate the case--for example, campus unrest at Berkeley was a great issue. Campus unrest did not show up in our research as a major issue in '65.

Every place that Ronald Reagan gave a speech, and we'd go to a Q and A format, because that was our way of saying, "Hey this guy's got a brain--he just gave you a speech, but he also can do these things." And they'd ask him questions. If he handled the questions, well, people would walk out of the room saying, "The man had some smarts," and he does have some smarts. So, in every Q and A, when I was travelling with him and Bill, somebody would get up and say, "What are you going to do about those bastards at Berkeley?," "What are you going to do about the campus thing--Mario Savio and that crowd?" And Reagan would answer the question--he was against them--okay.

So, Bill and I kept saying, it doesn't show up in the research, but the question keeps coming up--it's got to be a sub rosa emotional issue with people.

Morris: Did you do any cross-checking as to whether the people asking those questions might perchance have been U.C. grads? Because that question was causing the alumni association exceeding grief during those years.

Spencer: So what happened in essence was that the combination of things that were happening on campus, and we felt this underlying feeling, and we jumped on it as an issue. I think Reagan escalated it into an issue and it started showing up in the polls.

So how he handled that issue was important. There were people that were friends of Reagans that were deeply involved in the Goldwater thing that went out on their own and produced a five-minute film on the Berkeley riots. I must tell you it was a hairy, hairy film. They didn't even talk to us.

We killed it. We sat and we looked at the thing and just turned to Holmes Tuttle and said, "Hey, that's not going on the air." I mean they had gotten some great clips from police libraries--it was a brutal show. We had that issue under control. Reagan was on the right side of that issue. We didn't have to go out and do wild things about it.

Spencer: Pat Brown was the incumbent governor and with the board of regents--he had to pay the price for Berkeley, but these people wanted to overstate the case, and we wouldn't let them, and Reagan stuck with us and his key people.

The Birch question was the same way. He kept getting hit with the Birch questions, and so we came up with a half a page statement on the Birch Society, and when the press guys asked it, he'd say, "I've answered that and if you care to have me enlarge upon it, here's a written piece of paper to be handed out to you when we leave the room. Now let's get on to the major issues of this campaign." And so that went behind us and when we got those things behind us, Ronald Reagan was a winner, because he had it.

Morris: Did he have any ideas as to what he thought were the major issues in the campaign and how he wanted the campaign to be run?

Spencer: On the issue side, yes--on the technical side, no; he just totally left that up to us. Ron was a man trained just directly in the movie business, where you have a director and a producer and everybody carries their load. And because of that environmental background, he was a very easy candidate to work with for us. But on issues, he had beliefs--he had thoughts. You might convince him: let's don't discuss that one, and it's non-productive and he'd see the merits of it, but in terms of how he felt about Berkeley, how he felt about welfare programs, how he felt about size of government, he had strong feelings about those things.

Morris: I'm interested that he felt that the size of government was too large and that welfare was out of hand. I gather that he also was in favor of a tax increase?

Spencer: I don't remember. He could have been. Taxes were not an overriding issue in 1966--government efficiency was and that sort of thing. I don't know if Brown was in favor of the tax increase or not, to be honest with you, but I answer the question that way, because it was not an overriding issue like it is today, but he could have been.

Morris: Fair housing and the Rumford Act--?

Spencer: He was opposed to that on the individual choice basis, just like I assume Ron's opposed to bussing today. Ronald Reagan was not anti-minority. He is almost a libertarian in beliefs. He thinks we should be able to work these things out without the government encroaching on the individual choice.

He's not against a black person living in a neighborhood, but he thinks that somebody has the right to sell their house to who they want to. That's sort of a basic Reagan philosophy. I don't think it's changed that much.

Spencer: And those things get interpreted as being anti-something. And that's where he ended up.

Morris: That's why what stood out as things he was for or things that he accomplished in government came up.

Spencer: He made the university system one of his targets and as you know, when he showed up at the first board of regents meeting, he was off and winging. I laugh in retrospect, because he was probably better to the university system than Jerry Brown has been! [laughing]

Morris: In retrospect--

Spencer: But the university system was almost an untouchable when Reagan came in. It was quite a confrontation and you probably know more about it than I do. An interesting little tidbit was that in 1964, one of our strengths in the Rockefeller campaign, we thought were college campuses. If I recall correctly, we made the university go to the mat vis-a-vis using Mario Savio, to give us the opportunity to distribute our literature on campus. [laughing]

Morris: There was some question that you couldn't distribute your literature?

Spencer: There was some question at that point and time in history about just how it was distributed and they established some organized system at Mario's insistence and we were backing him one hundred percent.

District Mailings; Governor Brown's Errors

Morris: Did you find that there were any major changes needed from your original plan during the campaign of '66?

Spencer: No, that thing just kind of went by the plan. There were no changes. We were able to raise a lot of money by direct mail.

Any assembly district that was forty percent Republican or better, we could raise more than the cost of the mailing, just from Joe Doakes--

Morris: Was that a major source of funds or was it more to get people to feel connected.

Spencer: To feel connected. It was not a major source of funds, but it was unusual in the aspect that you could make a cold mailing to seventy-five thousand Republican households in an assembly district

Spencer: and get back more money than that mailer cost you. Usually that's just a loss. The dollars that came in were not big enough to be meaningful in terms of what the needs were.

Morris: What about any surprises from Pat Brown's campaign?

Spencer: The surprises that we saw were the mistakes that Pat made. Guggenheim's making that great half-hour spot where he made a derogatory remark about an actor shooting Abraham Lincoln.* It was a boo-boo. It solidified a lot of the movie colony that really wasn't behind Ron--Frank Sinatra and people like that. Public statements were made by him--they were offended, so that was a real boo-boo.

Ronald Reagan was going to win that election--we knew that. We knew that from the day the primary was over with.

Morris: Do you do the some kind of an evaluation on the opposition and his campaign?

Spencer: Oh, sure. Pat Brown had been there for eight years and he had been attorney general and Pat Brown had to pay the price of incumbency. Somebody, in my judgement, was going to beat Pat Brown. And Reagan's ability to articulate was his big strength and it still is today.

Morris: Was your feeling that it was as much that Pat Brown was going to lose because he'd been in office too long as that Reagan was going to win.

Spencer: Yes.

Reflections on the Role and Response of the Media

Morris: It sounds like your organization was strongly behind you and with you--how about the media?

Spencer: They were very suspect of Ronald Reagan and that was one of the contributions, I think, Spencer-Roberts was able to make, was to present him in a manner in which they realized that he was more than an actor. The media was very kind to Ronald Reagan. He may

*Asked to clarify this reference, Spencer replied in a note on the transcript: "Guggenheim made a half-hour TV show. In it he had somebody (maybe Brown) ask a child if he knew that it was an actor that shot Lincoln."

Spencer: not think so--the candidates never do, but they were fair with Ronald Reagan. I think he proved himself to them too in the process. They could have destroyed him, but they were fair to him.

Morris: You say they could have destroyed him?

Spencer: Well, they could have gone out on a vendetta and decided, we are not going to let this happen--this actor become governor and approached it from a subjective point of view, which press people have been known to do in history.

[phone interruption]

We did target other than Republicans. It was the first time we came up on the category "white conservative Democrats"-- we really went after them. They were the reason he won by almost a million votes--they went for Ronald Reagan.

Morris: That's in the November election. Did you use any special approaches for that?

Spencer: Yes, some of our media was designed for them and we had a lot of direct mail into that area and we did a lot of organizational work in those areas, because our demographics show us today, in the state that Bellflower, Paramount, Downey, are white conservative Democratic areas in southern California. And we have some over in the northeast corner of Orange County--in Cypress, and Garden Grove, all of that.

We targetted them in every technique we could use--scheduling of the governor going in there and talking to Garden Grove. They identified with him. He was the first candidate that they really identified with.

They deserted him to a degree in 1970, because of the economy, it was going this away--the recession, and they're labor types, and he was paying the price for what was happening federally, because he only won by half a million votes.

Morris: Sometimes the press referred to a distance--that it was difficult to get close to Reagan and that sometimes he would not answer the questions that they had. Did you find that a problem in coaching him and developing him?

Spencer: Ron was not a part of the system. We have a political establishment in this state--every state has it. It's people like me, it's the press people, it's Joe Cerrell on the other side, it's the officeholders; it's the polls.

Spencer: Ron wasn't a part of that--he was an intruder in this arena. Press people felt that way too, and so there was this distance.

Morris: Did you feel it?

Spencer: No, he was very close and outspoken and I got to know him very well. But he is not a hail-fellow-well-met--he's not a Pat Brown. He's closer in personality to Jerry Brown, in that aspect.

Nelson Rockefeller is a back-slapper. Ron is reserved, he's thoughtful, he isn't a drinker, he doesn't particularly like all that sort of stuff. He likes to talk about issues. He doesn't like to talk about what we did to that guy last year in the campaign and what I'm going to do to you next year, and all the fun and jokes of it.

The press never had that warm feeling for the man and that's why you hear about this distance and reserve. It was a personality thing more than anything else. You could put Ronald Reagan in the middle of a cocktail party--he wouldn't circulate, you had to bring people to him, because he just doesn't like to go over and cold turkey say, "Gabrielle, I'm Ron Reagan and I'm running for governor." It's not his style.

Morris: But you could counteract that?

Spencer: The media--when he got on the tube, he was great--warm. He's an external candidate, not an internal candidate.

Morris: One of the comments that's been made, that since television has become such an important factor in campaigns, that packaging has become more important than the substance of the candidate. How do you deal with that?

Spencer: I hate the word packaging, because it's not a true word--it's a word, but it isn't a true word by definition for the purpose. I come from the school of thought that you just can't fool all the people; that they can see through what you're doing.

The media is the utmost importance in--how a person is perceived on that media is very important. So, how it is produced and what is said is very important, but it is very difficult to change a candidate's philosophy and beliefs. And I don't think you can and I don't think you should try.

We don't try. We try to work with the framework of what they believe. We may emphasize one thing and de-emphasize something else--get them to do that sort of thing. But that's where the press comes in. They're the big referee of this whole

Spencer: ball game. And they have to, in their editorial pages and other things, make all these value judgements as to whether the person is being packaged and tinselled and saying things that they really don't believe or that the record doesn't show. And this is true of all candidates, not just Ronald Reagan.

There is always an innate threat in our system today, that some sharpie could come along and grab that tube and do some crazy things with it. There have been books written, The Imagemaker and some others. It's a long shot, but it could happen, but I would blame it on the press if it happened.

Morris: That's interesting. So you see the press as a separate, distinct factor in the political system.

Spencer: It's out there to keep us honest.

"The Perfect Campaign"

Morris: One last question--Do you agree with the judgement that your '66 campaign for Reagan was "the perfect campaign"?

Spencer: I like that when they say that. That's an overstatement. It was an easier campaign than people think.

Morris: Easier campaign?

Spencer: Once we got over the major hurdles, late in '65 and early '66, it was easy. The Clements' campaign, which I just consulted on for governor of Texas, was more of a perfect campaign than the Reagan campaign because we had more adversity. The Rockefeller campaign against Goldwater, which we lost, was a better campaign in some ways, but the Reagan campaign, everything fell in place.

From our standpoint it wasn't that hard a campaign. I've often said that once we've got him over the hump and headed in the right direction, he's going to win it with us or without us. The only thing we were able to do was, through that process, to keep him from making mistakes. They were prone to making mistakes, because they were new and green and that sort of thing.

Morris: Did Reagan have a separate personal staff, as it were, aside from the party and aside from your organization?

Spencer: Not in '66--he did in '70 when he was governor. We were his staff--we lived with the guy. We were his political counselors and he listened to us.

Morris: Did some of the people that you brought into the campaign then go with him into the governor's office?

Spencer: Yes, a whole bunch of them.

Morris: So from your point of view then, a perfect campaign is one in which there is adversity and you're starting with problems in establishing a candidate?

Spencer: There's two kinds--I just think a campaign where, like in Texas, they haven't had a Republican governor in 104 years--a Democrat stronghold and you're starting out with a candidate with a 10 percent name ID, but you have the other resources available. and you can pull it off, is a better campaign than one where it's a fifty-fifty situation, which California is. In any given year the Republicans have just as good a shot to get elected governor as the Democrats.

It was a good campaign, it was a volunteer campaign, it was a melding of all the resources better than any other campaign.

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